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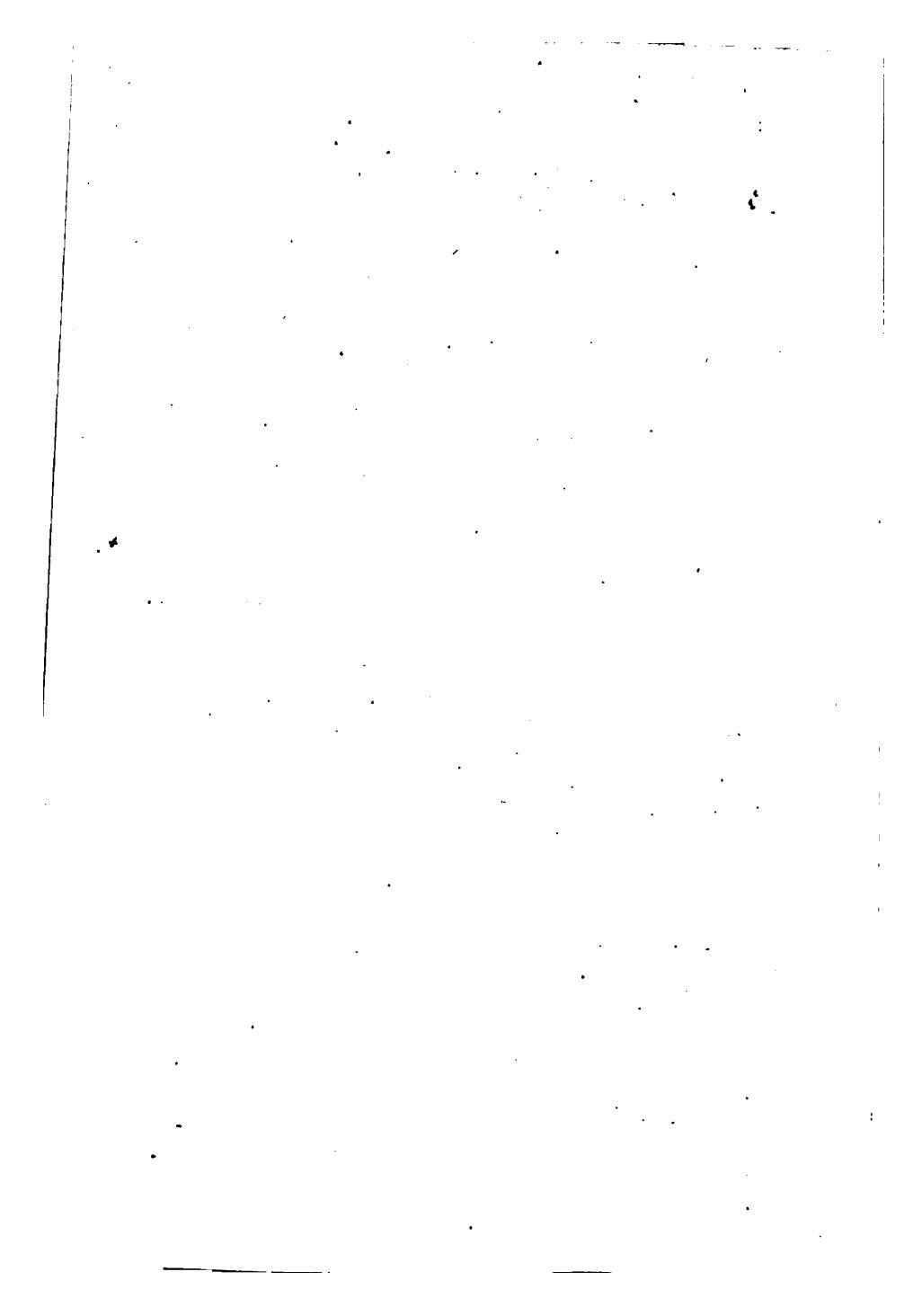
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**AT NIGHTFALL AND MIDNIGHT.**



# At Nightfall and Midnight:

*MUSINGS AFTER DARK.*

BY

FRANCIS JACOX,

AUTHOR OF

“CUES FROM ALL QUARTERS,” “ASPECTS OF AUTHORSHIP,”  
“TRAITS OF CHARACTER,” ETC.

“In the TWILIGHT, in the EVENING, in the black and dark NIGHT.”

*Prov. vii. 9*

“In the gloaming came the musings that take form with wan ing light ;  
And they sadden’d, and they darken’d, as eve sadden’d into night.”

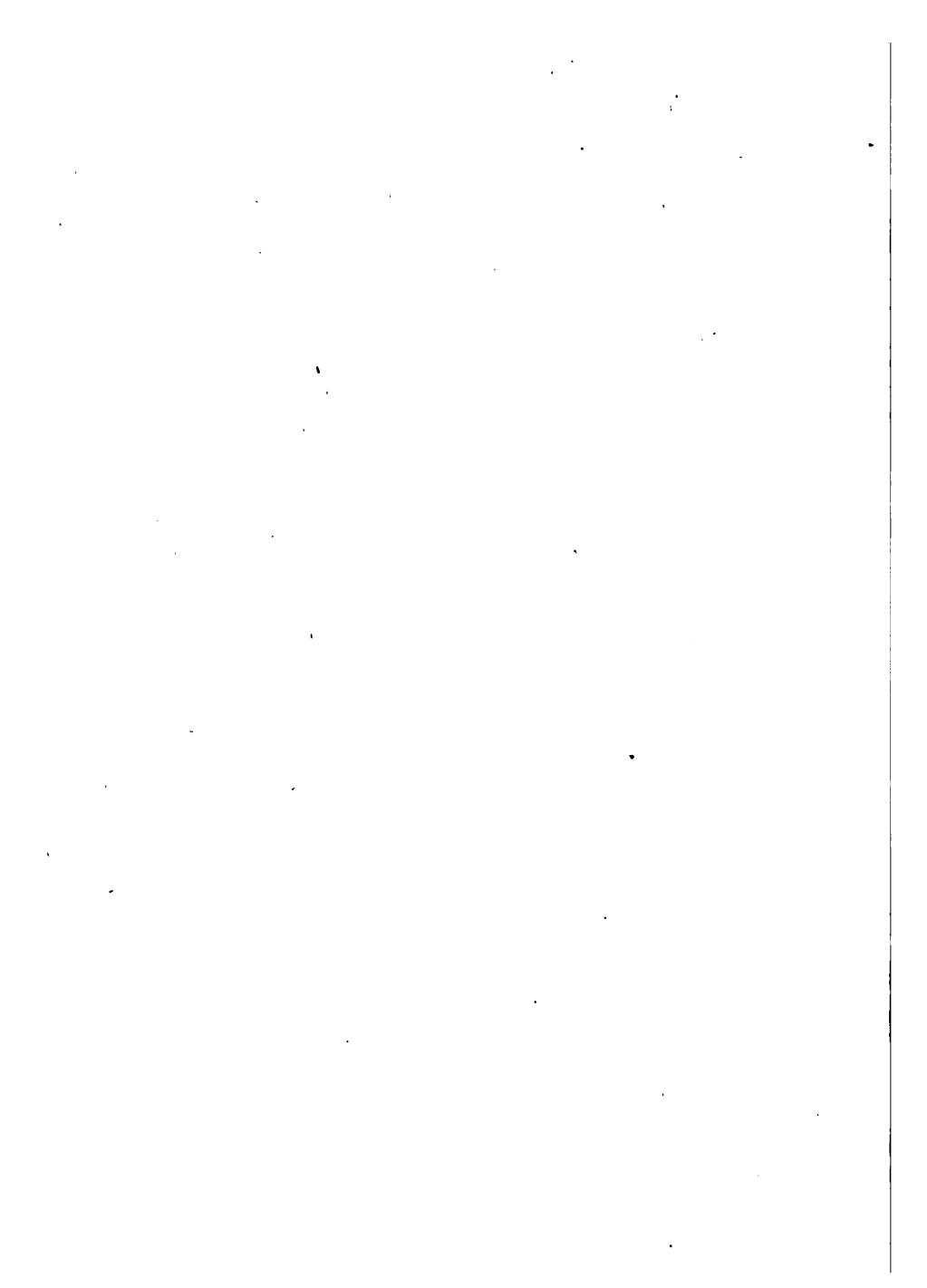
*Nicias Foxcar.*

London:

HODDER AND STOUGHTON,  
27 & 31, PATERNOSTER ROW.

MDCCCLXXIII.

270. f. 381.



# AT NIGHTFALL AND MIDNIGHT:

## *Musings after Dark.*

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### I.

#### *TWILIGHT.*

WITH the close of the day this book begins. The pathway of it is as the fading light, that waneth more and more unto the perfect dark.

Evening's welcome is sung as well by a devout Cowper as by an undevout Byron. If the latter hails Hesperus as bringing all good things—home to the weary, cheer to the hungry, re-union to the family—and greets twilight as the soft hour which wakes longing in the heart of the wanderer,—the former welcomes evening once again—season of peace, with a wish that, coming, it may continue long. The Flying Islander of Peter Wilkins rejoiced in twilight, gladdening as it deepened and darkened. That is not the normal feeling of humankind. But Cowper's welcome finds an echo in the heart of most, and few of us but have, at some time or other, seen Evening through his eyes.

“ Methinks I see thee in the streaky west,  
 With matron step slow moving, while the night  
 Treads on thy sweeping train ; one hand employed  
 In letting fall the curtain of repose  
 On bird and beast, the other charged for man  
 With sweet oblivion of the cares of day.

\* \* \* \* \*

Come then, and thou shalt find thy votary calm,  
 Or make me so. Composure is thy gift.”

So we read of the Monk Felix, as he walked within the woodlands, that the twilight was like the Truce of God with worldly woe and care. According to Mrs. Browning,

“ Eve is a twofold mystery—  
 The stillness Earth doth keep,—  
 The motion wherewith human hearts  
 Do each to either leap,  
 As if all souls between the poles  
 Felt ‘ Parting comes in sleep.’ ”

So begins her *Poet's Vow*; and in another and slighter but suggestive poem of hers, *A Sea-side Walk*, is this stanza :—

“ Nor moon nor stars were out.  
 They did not dare to tread so soon about,  
 Though trembling, in the footsteps of the sun.  
 The light was neither night's nor day's, but one  
 Which, life-like, had a beauty in its doubt ;  
 And Silence's impassioned breathings round  
 Seemed wandering into sound.”

The longest day had been quite long enough for Wordsworth when he wrote upon it, in its decline, that Evening now unbound the fetters fashioned by

the glowing light, and declared all that breathe to be “thankful debtors to the harbinger of night.” His studies of crepuscular effects, objective and subjective, are numerous and diversified. As “when the air glimmers with fading light, and shadowy Eve is busiest to confer and to bereave.” Or as “when Daylight, fled from earth, on the grey sky hath left his lingering Ghost, perplexed as if between a splendour lost and splendour slowly mustering,”—that of the starry host. Elsewhere he bids us observe how dewy Twilight has withdrawn the crowd of daisies from the shaven lawn, and has restored to view its tender green, that, while the sun rode high, was lost beneath their dazzling sheen.\* Mr. de Quincey gives Wordsworth the credit of having been the first that ever distinctly noticed the *abstracting* power of Twilight—that power of renewing, softening, harmonising, by which a mode of obscurity executes for the eye the same mysterious office which the mind so often within its own shadowy realms executes for itself. In the

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\* The didactic poet forgets not to make a moral “improvement” of his theme—offering it as an emblem of what the sober Twilight can do for minds disposed to feel its power :—

“ Thus oft, when we in vain have wished away  
The petty pleasures of the garish day,  
Meek eve shuts up the whole usurping host  
(Unbashful dwarfs each glittering at his post),  
And leaves the disencumbered spirit free  
To reassume a staid simplicity.”

“dim interspace between day and night,” says this most eloquent of critics, all disappears from our earthly scenery, as if touched by an enchanter’s rod, which is either mean, or inharmonious, or unquiet, or expressive of temporary things. “Leaning against a column of rock, looking down upon a lake or river, and at intervals carrying your eye forward through a vista of mountains, you become aware that your sight rests upon the very same spectacle, unaltered in a single feature, which once at the same hour was beheld by the legionary Roman from his embattled camp, or by the roving Briton in his ‘wolf-skin vest,’ lying down to sleep, and looking ‘through some leafy bower, before his eyes were closed.’” How magnificent, exclaims Wordsworth’s fervid expositor, is the summary or abstraction of the elementary features of such a scene, as executed by the poet himself, in illustration of this abstraction daily executed by nature, through her handmaid Twilight! “Listen, reader, to the closing strain, solemn as twilight is solemn, and grand as the spectacle which it describes :

“By him [*i.e.* the roving Briton] was seen  
The self-same vision which *we* now behold,  
At thy meek bidding, shadowy Power, brought forth,  
These mighty barriers, and the gulf between ;  
The floods, the stars,—a spectacle as old  
As the beginnings of the heavens and earth.”

From Mr. Tennyson, too, might be gathered an ample series of twilight effects ; whether of “large Hesper”

glittering on the tears of Mariana in the South ; or of the same lonesome expectant in her moated grange, so tearful that she could not look on the sweet heaven at even-tide, though she *did* draw her casement-curtain by, and glance athwart the gloomy flats, after night-fall ; or of the Gardener's Daughter's lover lingering till every daisy slept, and Love's white star beamed through the thickened cedar in the dusk, and anon the heavens between their fairy fleeces pale "sowed all their mystic gulfs with fleeting stars." At the close of *The Princess* the happy guests sat on, "so much the gathering darkness charmed :" sat on, but spoke not, rapt in nameless reverie, until

" — the walls

Blackened about us, bats wheeled, and owls whooped,  
And gradually the powers of the night,  
That range above the region of the wind,  
Deepening the courts of twilight broke them up  
Through all the silent spaces of the worlds,  
Beyond all thought into the Heaven of Heavens."

Readers of the poetry of the late William Sidney Walker can scarcely fail to have taken note of the spell which twilight exercised on his fond imagination. As in the Lover's Song, with its thoughts of early virtues gone, the sad and soothing memory of his best days mingling with dreams of one cherished image, whose presence he invokes :—

" Too solemn for day, too sweet for night,  
Come not in darkness, come not in light ;

But come in some twilight interim,  
When the gloom is soft and the light is dim.

“And in the white and silent dawn,  
When the curtains of night are half undrawn,  
Or at evening time, when my work is done,  
I will think of the lost remember’d one.”

Or again, in the verses on Evening, that celebrate the hour of rest, by sages loved, by poets sung, “when ‘mid the stillness of the breast the gates of thought are open flung ;

“When grief, and wrong, and worldly ills,  
Touched by the magic hour, are flown,  
As some meek-hearted mother stills  
With gentle voice her infant’s moan.”

Then the great spirit of the past is described as coming, with his rainbow-flag unfurled, whose folds, far-spread, “on all things cast a light, that is not of this world.” Such is the hour, the peaceful hour, he sings, by sages and by bards approved, when Hope and Memory blend their power, and they who love us, best are loved. As in Chauncy Hare Townshend’s stanza—

“This is the hour the loved are dearest,  
This is the hour the parted meet,  
The dead, the distant, now are nearest,  
And joy is soft, and sorrow sweet.”

The opening of Sidney Walker’s *Phantasmagoria* pictures him sitting alone, wistfully pensive, in “that hour of softened light, more still than noon, than eve

more bright." But dearer to him is eve itself, as felt and described in the *Horæ Subfuscæ*. Dear is it to Mr. Carlyle, if one may argue from the pervading tone of his meditative moods, and from such glimpses as that he gives of his Crown-Prince on still evenings, in solitude at quiet Ruppin (1732), looking out upon the silent death of Day: how the summer gloaming steals over the moorlands, and over all lands; shutting up the toil of mortals; their very flocks and herds collapsing into silence, and the vast Skies and endless Times overarching him and them. "With thoughts perhaps sombre enough now and then, but profitable if he face them piously." The author of *Old Kensington* has a characteristic bit of description of the west shining along the hills with a gorgeous autumnal fire—of the lights and the mists as they succeed one another, "streaming mysteriously before yonder great high altar," which has been blazing as if for a solemn ceremonial and burnt sacrifice. Evening incense rises from the valley, and mounts up through the stillness. "The waters catch the light, and repeat it; the illumination falls upon us too, as we look and see how high the heavens are in comparison with the earth; and suddenly, as we are waiting still, and looking and admiring, it is over—the glory has changed into peaceful twilight.

"And so we come away, closing shutters and doors and curtains, and settling down to our common occupations and thoughts again; but outside,

another high service is beginning, and the lights of the great northern altar are burning faintly in their turn."

Aurora Leigh has a picture of herself sitting at home

"On evenings, watching how they fined themselves  
With gradual conscience to a perfect night."

It is in Coleridge's Songs of the Pixies that, after an avaunt! or hence! to that lingerer, light, "Eve saddens into night." With Thomson among the crooked lanes, on every hedge we see the glowworm light his gem; and as, through the dark, a moving radiance twinkles, "Evening yields the world to night." Ever with a touch of sadness the happiest of us sees the shadows falling longer in the valleys, as Teufelsdröckh puts it, and the light growing more aërial on the mountain-tops; reminding him that as this bright day is closing, so must the day of man's existence decline into dust and darkness; and with all its sick toilings, and its joys and griefs, sink into the still eternity. Eve saddening into Night suggests that simile about Calantha in *The New Timon*—

"Hers was a beauty that made sad the eye,—  
Bright, but fast fading, like a twilight sky."

Victor Hugo, in *Les Consolations*, pictures, after his picturesque manner, the dying day and the on-

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coming night, into which eventide saddens until lost, submerged, in the dark profound :

“ La pâle nuit levait son front dans les nuées ;  
Les choses s’effaçaient, blêmes, diminuées,  
Sans forme et sans couleur ;  
Quand il monte de l’ombre, il tombe de la cendre ;  
On sentait à la fois la tristesse descendre  
Et monter la douleur.”

Milton, in *Comus*, likens grey-hooded Even to “a sad votarist in palmer’s weed.” Byron’s pilgrim on his way starts at the vesper bell, that seems to “weep the dying day’s decay.” Jean Paul says in his autobiography, that only in villages (because in towns there is more night than day work) have the evening-chimes a meaning and beauty, being indeed the swan-song of the day : the evening bell, like a *ranz des vaches* of the plain, he calls “the muffle of the over-loud heart,” summoning men from tumult into the land of silence and of dreams. On the other hand, Mr. Disraeli somewhere affirms that never does the beautiful hour of impending twilight exercise a more effective influence on the soul than when in view of some great city, at a distance ; so impressive is the contrast between the serenity and repose of our own bosoms and the fierce passions and corroding cares girt in the walls of that multitude whose domes and towers grow dim with declining day. This author might be drawn upon for various and diverse studies of twilight effect. The euthanasia of the day, he says

in *Coningsby*, exercises a strange influence on the hearts of those who love. Who has not felt it?—“the mitigating hour that softens the heart, and excites within it magical emotions.” In *Sybil* he devotes a paragraph to the twilight hour, as the hour at which in southern climes the peasant kneels before the sunset image of the blessed Hebrew maiden; when caravans halt in their long course over vast deserts; and the turbaned traveller, bending in the sand, pays his homage to the sacred stone and the sacred city; the hour, not less holy, that announces the cessation of English toil, and sends forth the miner and the collier to breathe the air of earth, and gaze on the light of heaven. In another of his books he describes the vespers of the birds faintly dying away, the last low of the returning kine sounding over the lea, the commencing gleams of the thin white moon, and the glittering of Hesperus in the fading sky. “It was the twilight hour.” And asking what is the magic of “that delicious hour that softens the heart of man,” the answer is: not merely its beauty; it is not more beautiful than the sunrise. “It is its repose. Our tumultuous passions sink with the sun; there is a fine sympathy between us and our world, and the stillness of Nature is responded to by the serenity of the soul.” All worldly cares, all the vulgar anxieties and aspirations which at other seasons hover like vultures over our existence, vanish then from the serene atmo-

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sphere of our susceptibility ; and “ a sense of beauty, a sentiment of love, pervades our being.” Delta’s hymn to Hesperus hails that bright lonely beam, fair heavenly speck, at whose sweet will it would seem that calm settled on the face of the earth, as if Nature were weary of Day’s strife :

“ Fair Star ! with calm repose and peace  
I hail thy vesper beam returning ;  
Thou seem’st to say that troubles cease  
In the calm sphere where thou art burning ;  
Sweet ’tis on thee to gaze and muse ;—  
Sure angel wings around thee hover,  
And from Life’s fountain scatter dews  
To freshen Earth, Day’s fever over.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*  
“ Star that proclaims Eternity !  
When o’er the lost Sun Twilight weepeth,  
Thou light’st thy beacon-tower on high,  
To say, ‘ He is not dead, but sleepeth.’ ”

Mrs. Boddington describes with feeling and art the fine tone of solemnity in the deep valley of Cauterets, half an hour before absolute night, when there are no shadows, but a deep and universal tint spread over the face of nature ;—darkness, gathering not from one settled point, but coming, as age does upon the human face, imperceptibly, yet palpably. “ Trees growing indistinct, and taking fantastic shapes, houses looking like rocks, rocks like castles ; but as we come up into the last light of the western sky, the tender, gauzy lilac, how beautiful it is ! and the stars that tremble through it coming out one by

one, until the firmament is studded over, and then the pale lilac growing paler, and melting into the true starlight blue—the blue of heaven.” That is a favourite passage in a chorus of the second part, so little read, of Goethe’s *Faust*, which brings before us the twilight mists of evening that dimly darken the green,—the signal for breezes to come with balmy fragrance, and for the heart to be soothed by sweet whispers, and rocked to infant-like rest, and for the eyes of the over-wearied to feel the gates of daylight close :

“Wenn sich lau die Lüfte füllen  
Um den grünumschränkten Plan,  
Süsse Düfte, Nebelhüllen  
Sinkt die Dämmerung heran;  
Lispelt leise süßen Frieden,  
Wieg das Herz in Kindesruh,  
Und den Augen dieses Müden  
Schliesst des Tages Pforten—zu.”

The Jews in elder times are said to have made two twilights, first and second : the first they called the dove’s twilight, or crepusculum of the day ; the second, the raven’s twilight, or crepusculum of the night. To the second of these, the English Opium-eater alludes, in a passage of his Confessions descriptive of “that tender fading hue preclusive to the twilight.” As in John Wilson’s *Evening in Furness Abbey*,

“—— It was that hour  
When Gloaming comes on hand-in-hand with Night,

Like dark twin-sisters, and the fairer Day  
Is loath to disappear ; when all three meet,  
Gloaming, and Day, and Night, with dew-drops crown'd,  
And veil'd, half-veil'd, each with her shadowy hair ;"

when all three meet in the uncertain dimness of the sky, each with a beauty of her own combined into harmonious colouring, "like a tune sung by three angel voices, up in heaven, unto the rapt ear of the listening earth."

But though it is with evening twilight these pages are concerned, place may be found in them for some reference at least to the dawn of day, to light in its first stages of existence, as well as its last. Like, but oh, how different ! It is the difference between looking forward and looking back.

Diffuse as Wordsworth may be at times, there are single lines of his that are hardly to be surpassed in suggestive beauty and graphic power. Among such may be reckoned one in the finest of all his Odes, which thus expresses the winsome loveliness of the early morning—

" The innocent brightness of a new-born day."

Here, as indeed everywhere, the poet intermingles the interests of man with the charms of nature, and adds a pathetic meaning to the latter by the ascription to them of a moral element. Innocence is attributed to the dawn of day, because he inseparably connects it with the dawn of infant life, with the

promise, or at least, the possibilities and capacities for good, of a new-born child.

Elsewhere he sings of—

“—vernal mornings opening bright  
With views of undefined delight.”

And his delight in the prospect—literally a prospect, or a looking forward, and the more a delight because undefined, as all lookings forward must be—is again set forth in the “Excursion,” when he and the Solitary renew at sunrise their walk among the hills, then “with aërial softness clad, and beautified with morning’s purple beams;” while the fellow-travellers, pacing side by side, find in that scene and by that season their spirits braced, their thoughts—

“Pleasant as roses in the thickets blown,  
And pure as dew bathing their crimson leaves.”

An original essayist has said that when we read the poets, we think that nothing new can be started about morning and evening; but that when we see the day-break, we are not reminded—at least he is not—of these Homeric, or Shakspearean, or Miltonic, or Chaucerian pictures. But we are “cheered by one moist, warm, glittering, budding, melodious hour, that takes down the narrow walls of the soul, and extends its life and pulsation to the very horizon. “*That* is morning, to cease for a bright hour to be a prisoner of this sickly body, and to become as large as nature.” It is the same writer who, in another work, with quaint

vehement beseeches those who have not slept, or who, having slept, are yet depressed by headache, or sciatica, or any other trouble, physical or metaphysical, to hold their peace, "and not pollute the morning, to which the other housemates bring serene and pleasant thoughts," by dejection and groans. Another and an elder essayist in the same spirit prescribes flowers on a morning table as specially suitable to the time ; they look like the happy wakening of the creation, and bring the perfume of the breath of nature into the room, and are the graces of our home's good-morrow.

"At morn the black-cock trims his jetty wing,  
'Tis morning prompts the linnet's blythest lay,  
All nature's children feel the matin spring  
Of life reviving, with reviving day."

The lovely world that Adam beheld, says the author of an *Essay without End*, is not only the same to-day, it is created and given to us anew every day. Morning is born again for us, three hundred and sixty-five times a year, and "every time as fresh, and new, and innocent as that which first dawned over Eden." Rousseau compares the morning of life with the morning of the day—full of purity, of images and harmonies : "*plein de pureté, d'images et d'harmonies.*" The poet of the *Three Gates* bids us

"—in the meadows look upon the flower,  
Fresh as it ever bloom'd in Eden's bower,  
And bright as childhood is the morning hour."

There is even in the vicinity of London, observes the author of *Violet*, a freshness and sweetness in the air at daybreak, "which is not in accordance with ugly undertakings of any sort : I think at early dawn it always seems as if the day were still too young to be giving birth to deeds of evil." So in one of Mr. Dickens's earliest works we have a duellist and his companions breaking up from the gaming table at dawn of day, and a vivid contrast is pictured between the flaring light and hot, close atmosphere of the room, tainted with the smell of expiring lamps, and reeking with the steams of riot and dissipation,—and the clear, bright, glorious morning,—the free, fresh, wholesome air. "But to the fevered head on which that cool air blew, it seemed to come laden with remorse for time mis-spent and countless opportunities neglected. With throbbing veins and burning skin, eyes wild and heavy, thoughts hurried and disordered, he felt as though the light were a reproach, and shrunk involuntarily from the day as if he were some foul and hideous thing."

The morning, says Mr. Peacock, is the infancy of the day, and, like the infancy of life, has health, and bloom, and cheerfulness, and purity, in a degree unknown to the busy noon, which is the season of care, or the languid evening, which is the harbinger of repose. Morning, said to be friendly to the Muses, has probably, as Sir Walter Scott suggests, obtained this character from its effects upon the fancy and

feelings of mankind. "Even to those who, like Lovel, have spent a sleepless and anxious night, the breeze of the dawn brings strength and quickness both of mind and body." So again, Sir Ralph Esher, who testifies that "the later I go to bed, the earlier I can rise, I suppose from restlessness," commemorates a night of conviviality and riotous wit, on the morning after which he rose feverish and unrefreshed : "There had been rain in the night, the dust was laid, the trees and hedges sparkled with rain drops ; and as I rode along I seemed to quench myself in the freshness of the morning." Miss Ferrier describes her Gertrude inhaling the fresh morning air, fraught with the sweets of early summer, where "the scent comes and goes like the warbling of music," till her heart exults, in all the joyousness of youth and health, in the brightness of creation.

"The dawn on the mountains ! the dawn everywhere !  
Light, silence, the fresh renovations of air . . .  
Around the green meadows, adown the hill slope,  
The spirits of morning were whispering *Hope*!"

Another, and most popular, penwoman exclaims, "Oh, with what freshness, what solemnity and beauty is each day born : as if to say to insensate man, 'Behold, thou hast one more chance. *Strive* for immortal glory !' There is no speech nor language where this voice is not heard." Why is Ethel so long silent, Cornelius asks in Roscoe's tragedy ; and the answer is—

“—Stillness of morning,  
And the ineffable serenity  
And peace of young creation, bind my lips.”

One of this author's sonnets begins,—

“Fair unto all men, shining Morning, seems  
Thy face serene when a new day unrolls,  
And all old sights and long-endurèd doles  
Seem fresh and bearable in thy bright beams.”

“There is a charm,” exclaims Hurdis, “which morning has, that gives the brow of age a smack of youth.” Sydney Dobell finely says that—

*“Morn hath no past.*  
Primeval, perfect, she, not born to toil,  
Steppeth from under the great weight of life,  
And stands as at the first.”

There are few of us, says George Eliot, who are not rather ashamed of our sins and follies as we look out on the blessed morning sunlight, which “comes to us like a bright-winged angel, beckoning us to quit the old path of vanity that stretches its weary length behind us.”

Quite an exception, insomuch as to become a portent, is such a daybreak as dawns on the Roman conspirators in Jonson's tragedy, that “morning full of fate” to Catiline and his crew—

“It riseth slowly, as her sullen ear  
Had all the weights of sleep and death hung at it.  
She is not rosy-finger'd, but swell'n black ;  
Her face is like a water turn'd to blood,

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And her sick head is bound about with clouds,  
As if she threaten'd night ere noon of day !  
It doth not look as it would have a hail  
Or health wish'd in it, as on other morns."

Contrast with this the sketch by De Quincey of Cæsar crossing the Rubicon,—of Cæsar, Catiline's sometime comrade, now contemplating on the banks of that fatal river the immeasurable consequences of crossing it,—“impressed also by the solemnity and deep tranquility of the silent dawn.” Cæsar, we are assured, must have been profoundly agitated. “The whole elements of the scene were almost scenically disposed; the law of antagonism having never perhaps been employed with so much effect; the little quiet brook presenting a direct antithesis to its grand political character; and the innocent dawn, with its pure untroubled repose, contrasting potently, to a man of any intellectual sensibility, with the long chaos of bloodshed, darkness, and anarchy, which was to take its rise from the apparently trifling acts of this one morning.” The *Confessions of an English Opium-eater* offer a somewhat parallel passage from the same pen. It is that descriptive of the lad's flight from school—how the morning came which was to launch him into the world, the morning from which his whole succeeding life was to take its colouring; how he rose between three and four, and gazed with deep emotion at the ancient collegiate church, “dressed in earliest light,” and

beginning to crimson with the deep lustre of a cloudless July morning. He was agitated by anticipation of uncertain danger and troubles. To this agitation the deep peace of the morning presented an affecting contrast. "The silence was more profound than that of midnight: and to me the silence of a summer morning is more touching than all other silence, because, the light being broad and strong as that of noonday at other seasons of the year, it seems to differ from perfect day chiefly because man is not yet abroad; and thus, the peace of nature, and of the innocent creatures of God, seems to be secure and deep, only so long as the presence of man, and his unquiet spirit, are not there to trouble its sanctity."

"Is it not well to rise with early morn?" asks young Portia of Sulpicius, in *The Martyr*: all looks so "young and fresh." And he answers:

"Yes, morn and youth and freshness sweetly join,  
And are the emblems of dear changeful days.  
By night those beauteous things—

*Portia.* And what of night?  
Why do you check your words? You are not sad?  
*Sul.* No, Portia; only angry with myself  
For crossing the gay stream of youthful thoughts  
With those of sullen age."

It brings us back to the other twilight. Between the twilight of dawn and that of dusk at even, the difference, as already observed, is as it were that between looking forward and looking back. And

what a difference that is! Let us again digress, and pause by the way, to take note of it a little.

Balzac describes a *reunion* of seniors and juniors, lookers onward in life and lookers back, all of whose opinions, however, reflected a twofold tint of melancholy : "l'une avait la pâleur des crépuscules du soir, c'était le souvenir presque effacé de joies qui ne devaient plus renaître ; l'autre, comme l'aurore, donnait l'espoir nuancé d'un beau jour." Chateaubriand is interrupted in penning a chapter of his Memoirs by the song of a thrush at Montboissier, for instantly the magic sound calls up before him his father's dwelling (as the finding of the sparrow's nest did in Wordsworth's case), and once more he sees the plains where so often he had listened to the mavis in full voice. When listening to it in those early days he felt the same sadness, he tells us, as now ; but the early melancholy was that which springs from a vague longing for happiness, when experience has not as yet visited us. The sadness he now feels, is the result of a knowledge of things which have been appraised and judged. "The songs of the birds in the forests of Combourg spoke to me of a happiness which I thought it in my power to obtain. The same song in the park of Montboissier recalls to me days lost in the pursuit of this ever-flying happiness." He has no longer anything to learn. He has made the tour of life : the hours are on the wing, and drag him along with them, and he has not even the certainty that he

shall be able to finish these *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*. On another occasion, describing his sojourn in the Vallée-aux-Loups, when first purchased, he tells how he pictured to himself what his park would be like at some future day ; "for at that time I still looked forward to the future." When he *now* sought to open up once more, by the aid of memory, the horizon which had closed around him, he could no longer recall the same which he then saw, but found himself surrounded by another. He now lost himself in the midst of long-vanished thoughts ; his present illusions might perhaps be as full of beauty as those which filled his mind in early youth, but they were no longer so youthful. That which he then saw by the splendour of the noon tide glare, he now contemplated by the milder light of the setting sun. Frederick Robertson calls it a satire on existence to compare the youth in the outset of his career, flushed and sanguine, with the aspect of the same being when it is nearly done —worn, sobered, covered with the dust of life, and confessing that his days have been few and evil. "Where is the land flowing with milk and honey?" The difference is like that between the arrival of Richárd's queen, in Shakspeare, from a foreign shore, and her dismissal thither again,

" — from whence set forth in pomp,  
She came adorned hither like sweet May :  
Sent back like Hallowmas, or short'st of day."

The difference is as between the freshness of the

first beam glittering on a sail, "that brings our friends up from the underworld," and the sadness of the last "which reddens over one that sinks with all we love below the verge." It is as between the glittering host of Xerxes, advancing over the plains of Macedonia and Thrace to the conquest of Greece, with all splendour, pomp, luxury, and waste, and hurrying back along the same road in disorder and distress, want and disease. With Columbus we ascend a second time the mountain pass whence first he had looked down on the Vega, and mark the difference of feeling with which he regards it now. He had delighted in imagining himself the beneficent ruler of a peaceful and attached people; but the passions of the white-man had converted that smiling and once hospitable region into a land of wrath and hatred. With Cortez, on the *noche triste* of 1520, we gaze on his poor remnant of followers huddled together in a miserable way; all that had survived of the brilliant array with which but a few weeks since he had entered the capital of Mexico. "Where were now his dreams of conquest and empire?" Whichever way he turned, the horizon was almost equally gloomy, with scarcely one light spot to cheer him; whereas, in looking forward all had seemed radiant with promise. So with that other band of Spaniards under Gonzalo Pizarro, in 1542, when, in their home-ward march, the way-worn company came on the elevated plains in the neighbourhood of Quito: how

different their aspect from that which they had exhibited on issuing from the gates of the same capital two years and a half before, as the historian of the Conquest of Peru describes them, with high romantic hope, and in all the pride of military array—now like a troop of dismal spectres, as with uncertain step they glided slowly onwards—“as if the charnel-house had given up its dead.” Or again, glance with Michelet at Charles the Sixth traversing alone the wearisome forests of Maine, stunted and affording no shade from the burning August heats of 1302, and bethinking him that it was also in a forest, but how different! that twelve years before, he had encountered the marvellous stag, a rencontre so full of favourable augury: he was then young, full of hope, his heart beating high, and ready for great thoughts. “But how far below had he fallen! Out of the kingdom, he had failed everywhere, tried every thing, missed all. Even in the kingdom, was he really king?” Nay, the question was now to be, Was he even himself?—or rather there was to be no question of his being out of his senses, and therefore, as the phrase goes, beside himself. A suggestive picture too, is that of Charles Edward during the retreat from Derby: in the march forward he had always been first up in the morning, and walked at the head of his men; but now, all his alacrity gone, and with hopes nearly blighted, he lagged behind them all, spiritless and slouching and sluggish. On beginning the retreat before daybreak, many of

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the officers and all the common soldiers, unaware as yet of the resolution of the council, supposed they were going to fight the Duke of Cumberland, and displayed the utmost cheerfulness and alacrity; but as soon as daylight allowed them to see the surrounding objects, and they found, from marks they had taken of the road, that they were retracing their steps, nothing was to be heard throughout the army but expressions of rage and lamentation. So cruel is the hard and fast line between looking forward and looking back.

The echoes are endless of this monotone, this common-place truism of everybody's experience. Stale as can be in itself, it is ever fresh in its appeal to individual sensibilities; and in every variety of expression it comes out in every-day books and every-day lives and every-day life. One recalls Madame Roland's *Memoirs*; in the same book may be read the description of the young and ardent girl seated in her room on the Quai des Orfèvres, dreaming of love, and aspiring after glory; then, by a rapid flight of the pen, the scene lies in the gloomy dungeon, where a poor captive sighs in bitterness of heart, relinquishing by degrees every tender tie or hopeful illusion, and seeing nothing before her but the scaffold. What a familiar type again is that of Warren Hastings, as Macaulay sketches the boy of seven years, lying on the river's bank one bright summer's day, where,—as

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threescore and ten years later he told the tale,—rose in his mind a never-abandoned scheme of recovering the estate which had belonged to his fathers, through which domain that river flowed. So is that of John Howard taking his leave of Cardington,—remembering with what hope, pride, love, he had there, in his youth, reared up a future for himself,—the future of a quiet pastoral home, in which he should grow old in peace. “And there he stood in his old age, homeless and a wanderer; a man—so different to his old fancies—familiar with strange lands, and with his old humanities all broken.” With John Foster we glance in after-life on the course of the river Avon, on the banks of which he had so often walked in solitary musings, wondering what might be the appointed pathway of his future career, and forming plans and resolutions, of which so little, he now laments, had been accomplished. As he writes on another occasion, but in a similar strain: “An interval of more than forty years makes all the difference between the morning of life and its evening;” the mind, in the one position, occupied with imagination, conjectures possibilities, resolutions, hopes; in the other, looking back to see that visionary speculation reduced to the humility of an experience and a reality in which there is over-room for regret and self-reproach. Thackeray, sitting under Time, with his back to the horses, and his face to the

past, looking at the receding landscape, and the hills fading into the grey distance, utters an "Ah, me! those gray, distant hills were green once, and *here*, and covered with smiling people." The young folks in the same carriage, meanwhile, "sitting under Time, the white-wigged charioteer," are looking forwards: to them the landscape is all bright, the air brisk and bracing, and the town yonder looks beautiful. Guy Mannering's second visit to the old towers of Ellangowan is marked by sombre reflections on the utterly different feelings with which he had lost sight of them so many years before. The landscape was the same, we read; "but how changed the feelings, hopes, and views of the spectator!" Then, life and love were new, and all the prospect was gilded by their rays. And now, disappointed in affection, sated with fame, and what the world calls success, his mind goaded by bitter and repentant recollections, his best hope was to find a retirement in which he might nurse the melancholy that was to accompany him to the grave.

Embarking from Lochnanuagh, for an escape to France, Prince Charles Edward thus re-visited a spot, which, fourteen months before, had been his landing point—but how changed, meanwhile, his fate and his emotions! With what different feelings, as one historian of the Rebellion moralizes, must the Young Chevalier have gazed upon those desolate

mountains, when stepping from his ship in the ardour of hope and coming victory ; and now, when he saw them fade away in the blue distance, and bade them an everlasting farewell ! Mark again what Mr. Carlyle calls one of the noblest retreats in history, that of "the Eleven," in July, 1793, whom he apostrophizes after his manner : "Unhappiest of all Legislators, O when ye packed your baggage, some score or two-score months ago, and mounted this or the other leathern vehicle, to be Conscript Fathers of a regenerated France, and reap deathless laurels,—did ye think your journey was to lead *hither*?"—way-worn, heart-worn, fugitive vagrants, in agony of suspense, squatting under the thick wet boscage, suspicious of the face of man. So to have looked forward, and so to now look back ! Mr. Trollope is suggestively sarcastic in watching, at Cairo, the high spirits of one set of passengers going out to India,—young men free of all encumbrances, and pretty girls full of life's brightest hopes,—and then, again, by way of contrast, the morose, discontented faces of another set returning home with babies and tawny-coloured nurses, with silver rings in their toes. Nor have we outgrown or outlived an interest in Miss Austen's Catherine Morland newly come back from Northanger Abbey, with all her thinking powers absorbed in the reflection of her own change of feelings and spirits since last she had trodden that well-known

road between her father's house and the Allens'. It was not three months ago since, wild with joyful expectation, she had there run backwards and forwards, some ten times a day, with a heart light, gay, and independent; looking forward to pleasures untasted and unalloyed, and as free from the apprehension of evil as from the knowledge of it. "Three months ago had seen her all this; and now, how altered a being did she return!" So with the Eleanor Vane of a later lady-novelist, returning to England from France, *via* Dieppe and Newhaven, her eyes now wandering wearily and sadly over the same sunlit landscape which had so enraptured her a month ago, but where nothing but desolation seemed now to meet her gaze. She recognised swelling hills and broad patches of verdure, winding glimpses of the river, far-away villages glimmering whitely in the distance, and she wondered at the change in herself which had made all these things so different to her. "What a child she had been a month ago! what a reckless happy child, looking forward in foolish certainty to a long life with her father," and ready to hope for anything in the boundless future, with a whole fairy-land of pleasure and delight spreading out before her eager feet; and now she was a woman, alone in a horrible desert, over whose dreary sands she must toil slowly to the end she hoped to reach. Then, too, we have Mrs. Gaskell's Ruth, wander-

ing from window to window, learning off each rock and tree by heart—each with its tale to tell, agony to remember, but worse agony to forget. “And now all was over. She had driven to Llan-dhu, living in the bright present, and strangely forgetful of the past or the future : she had dreamed out her dream, and she had awokened from the vision of love.” Galt’s Sir Andrew Wylie, walking to Stoneyholm, and recognising every step of the road which he had so often travelled, and pondering on a thousand little incidents that had long slept in his remembrance, but were now recalled as with the sadness and solemnity of churchyard recollections, is another representative figure, retrospective with a purpose.

Smollett’s latest and ripest book was a record of the Scot’s last visit to his native land, written, as Professor Masson reminds us, while, as his breath grew faint under the kindly Italian sky, all his intervening years of toil and trouble faded from his fancy as a dream, and he was again a boy, with life bright before him, glorying in Wallace and Bruce, walking in the streets of Glasgow, fishing by the banks of the Leven, or boating on the still waters of Loch Lomond. Sir Walter Scott, when days were dark with him, noted in his diary (July, 1826) the melancholy contrast his imagination drew between (himself) the young man entering the world on fire for fame, and busied in imaginary means of coming by it, and (himself) the aged widower, *blasé* on the

point of literary reputation, and looking back to regret instead of forward to hope. Moore finds it impossible not to pause when relating Byron's arrival at Missolonghi, in 1809, in order to send a mournful thought forward to the visit which, fifteen years later, he paid to this same spot, where, in the full meridian both of his age and fame, he came to die for the land through which he now wandered a stripling and a stranger,—the events of the interval supplying ample text for moral musings, and for an almost cruelly sharp contrast between looking forward and looking back. Homely illustrations crowd upon us, of the type of Etty journalizing his departure from York to earn his bread, forty-six years before, and his emotions on finding himself again in the city he had left sorrowing,—“happily, *then*, unconscious of the rough billows that lay between me and the haven of peace”—or of Turner, in one of his earliest pictures, *almost* bringing in the little cottage in which, fifty-five years later, he died: “How little the hopeful young genius thought of the old worn-out man who would die in the adjacent cottage long years after!” his biographer exclaims. Or look across the Yorkshire moors at that quiet room in the Haworth parsonage, where the three Bronté sisters used to sew till nine at night, then put away their work, and begin to pace to and fro—as often with the candles extinguished, for economy's sake, as not—and talking over their plans for the future,

in sisterly congenial council, and discussing together in later years the plots of their novels. This was the hour when, still later, the last surviving sister used to walk alone, from old accustomed habit, round and round the desolate room, thinking sadly of the days that were no more, and meditating on the shadowy depths of contrast between looking forward and looking back.

But to revert before closing, only at a tangent, and off again, once touched,—off and away for good and all,—to the “innocent brightness of the new-born day,” and its contrast to the gloaming. Fenimore Cooper has somewhere a picture of daybreak, with the usual soft tints of the sky, in which neither the gloom of darkness nor the brilliancy of the sun prevails, and under which objects appear more unearthly, say, indeed, more holy, than in any other portion of the twenty-four hours. The beautiful and soothing calm of eventide has been extolled by a thousand poets, and yet it does not, he maintains, bring with it the far-reaching and sublime thoughts of the half-hour that precedes the rising of a summer’s sun. In the one case the panorama is gradually hid from the sight, while, in the other, its objects ~~are~~ <sup>are</sup> put out from the unfolding picture, first dim and hazy, then marked in, in solemn back-ground; next and in the witchery of an *increasing*, a thing as bright as possible from the *decreasing* twilight; and

finally mellow, distinct and luminous as the rays of the great centre of light diffuse themselves in the atmosphere." Different as possible he well may call the increasing from the decreasing daylight ; the prospective from the retrospective ; the waxing from the waning ; the birth of day from its decadence and decease. Wordsworth, in his sonnet to the planet Venus, composed at Loch Lomond, asserts that the lofty spirit is more cheered to watch the course of that evening star when daylight has fled, than at day-break, keenly "though joy attend thee orient at the birth of dawn." But not so with the birth of dawn itself, in and for itself, as contrasted with the corresponding twilight of dying day. There is depth of sad significance in what Coleridge sings, in singing the lapse of Youth into Age :

"Dewdrops are the gems of morning,  
But the tears of mournful eve."

## II.

### *HOMEWARDS AT NIGHTFALL, AND HOME FOR THE NIGHT.*

WITH genuine delight Cobbett used to watch the labourers in the woodland parts of Hampshire and Sussex, coming at nightfall towards their cottage-wickets, laden with fuel for a day or two ; while three or four little creatures were looking out for the father's approach, and after running in to proclaim the glad tidings, would then scamper out to meet him, clinging round his knees, or hanging on his skirts. “However distant from his cottage, his heart is always at that home towards which he is carried at night by limbs that feel not their weariness, being urged on by a heart anticipating the welcome of those who attend him there.” Man—and specially the labouring man—goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening. Evening brings him home ; and brings him his welcome home ere yet that home be reached. Happy man is there his dole for the dolour of toil and weariness ; and ere yet he crosses his threshold, the patter of little feet and the “one consent” of little voices will have made him well-nigh forget the burden and heat of the day, or its bleak winds and pelting showers, as the season may betide.

As Gray's curfew tolls the knell of parting day, and the lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea, we watch too the ploughman homeward plod his weary way,—cheered, however, by the certainty that for him the blazing fire already burns, and busy housewife plies her evening care; nearing home, we see him met by children that run to lisp their sire's return, and anon climb his knee the envied kiss to share. It gives the key-note to the Elegy, the "No more for thee," dead and gone rustic, shall all these homely joys recur. As in the lines of Lucretius, adapting them to the purpose, however wide of it in their purport,—

"At jam non domus accipiet te læta, neque uxor  
Optima, nec dulces occurrent oscula nati  
Præripere, et tacita pectus dulcedine tangent."

The poor thrasher in the old ballad, who is questioned by the nobleman, his neighbour, about the ways and means of his daily life, takes care to couple his wife with himself as his helpmate and equal in toil—both of them striving, "like the labouring ant," to keep want from the door; and having described the doing of his day's work, he continues,—

"And when I come home from my labour at night,  
To my wife and my children, in whom I delight,  
To see them come round me with Prattling noise,—  
Now these are the riches a poor man enjoys.

"Though I am as weary as weary can be,  
The youngest I commonly dance on my knee," etc.

It has been well said that to labourers of all kinds. has been given at least one source of pleasure and of fine feeling, besides that pleasure of health which may or may not accompany toil,—and that is the poetry of family life, and especially of children ; for most men, however rude and hard and brutalized they may be, feel a tenderness steal over them when the helpless little things cling to them and smile on them. Labour's own laureate, in the person of the Scottish ploughman who sang the Cottar's Saturday Night, has made poetry of the subject that is ranged with the classics of British verse : we hear November chill blow loud “wi' angry sugh,” we see the shortening winter-day draw near a close, and watch the miry beasts retreating from the plough, while blackening trains of crows make for their nests ; meanwhile,—

“ The toil-worn cottar frae his labour goes,  
This night his weekly moil is at an end,  
Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,  
Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,  
And weary, o'er the moor, his course does homeward bend.

“ At length his lonely cot appears in view,  
Beneath the shelter of an aged tree ;  
The expectant wee things, toddlin, stacher thro',  
To meet their dad, wi' flichterin noise an' glee.  
His wee bit ingle, blinkin bonnily,  
His clean hearth-stane, his thriftie wifie's smile,  
The lisping infant Prattling on his knee,  
Does a' his weary carking cares beguile,  
An' makes him quite forget his labour an' his toil.”

Douglas, in a recent story, looks wistfully at the faint twinkling lights that begin to glimmer in some of the windows of the remote country village whither he has wandered ; there is "home" for every one but himself, he thinks. He sees a day-labourer slouching towards one of these lowly homesteads ; and the whilom Sybarite and dilettante grudges the wearied hind the rough but cordial greeting that welcomes him into the little dark, close room. "A fat, un-washed-looking baby contrived with great difficulty to raise the garden latch with the tips of her round fingers, and then ran crowing with delight to the new comer, who, tired as he seemed, was not too weary to toss the chuckling dimpled burthen on to his shoulder." That squalid cottage was filled with loveliness for the jaded hedger and ditcher ; the house might be small and dark, the rooms closely packed as cells in a beehive, but *there* was refuge from burning suns and biting winds ; there was the tendance of hands, rough, it is true, but made gentle by love ; and there was the "sweet human pride of paternity," and that sense of comfort in fellowship, which is in such strange contrast with the solitude of the vast dark high-road we traverse alone. It is in the section of the New England poem of *Kathrina*, entitled "Labour," that we come across this corresponding phase of city life :—

"With senses dazed and stunned, and soul o'erfilled  
With chaos of new thoughts, I turned away,

And sought my city home. There all was calm,  
 With wife and daughter waiting my return,  
 And eager with their welcome. That was life!—  
 An interest in the great world of life,  
 A place for toil within a world of toil,  
 And love for its reward. ‘Amen!’ I said,  
 ‘And twice amen! I’ve found my life at last.’”

Jean Paul Richter’s memorial of evening, when the hunted, wearied man desires to be at rest,—for the evening of a day, for the evening of a year (autumn), and for the evening of his life, he carries home his wearisome harvests, and hopes so much,—reminds us of Byron’s apostrophe to the Evening Star, that bringeth all good things, home to the weary, and cheer to the hungry, and the welcome stall to the o’erlaboured steer :

“ Whate’er of peace about our hearthstone clings,  
 Whate’er our household gods protect of dear,  
 Are gather’d round us by thy look of rest.”

Or again, which is more to the purpose, that passage in the earlier canto, following the parallel, “ ‘Tis sweet to see the evening star appear,” and going on to enumerate among other *dulcia*,

“ ‘Tis sweet to hear the watch-dog’s honest bark  
 Bay deep-mouth’d welcome as we draw near home ;  
 ‘Tis sweet to know there is an eye will mark  
 Our coming, and look brighter when we come.”

Shelley too has his sketch of

“ the peasant who fulfils  
 His unforced task, when he returns at even

And by the blazing faggot meets again  
Her welcome for whom all his toil is sped."

Mrs. Norton's picture of twilight, in her Winter's Walk, takes in its "faint and sweet" fall round the peasant's homeward feet, who, slow returning from his task of toil, sees the low sunset gild the cultured soil,—

"And though such radiance round him brightly glows,  
Marks the small spark his cottage-window throws.  
Still as his heart forestalls his weary pace,  
Fondly he dreams of each familiar face,|  
Recalls the treasures of his narrow life—  
His rosy children and his sunburnt wife,  
To whom *his* coming is the chief event  
Of simple days in cheerful labour spent.

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—*Him* they wait for, *him* they welcome home,  
Fixed sentinels look forth to see him come ;  
The faggot sent for when the fire grew dim,  
The frugal meal prepared, are all for him ;  
For him the watching of that sturdy boy,  
For him those smiles of tenderness and joy,  
For him—who plods his sauntering way along,  
Whistling the fragment of some village song."

What a cheery description is Scott's of Dandie Dinmont's return to Charlies-hope, with that unfeigned rapture of his well-favoured buxom wife, as she welcomes him with an "Eh, gudeman ! ye hae been a weary while away !" Harry Bertram is a gratified looker-on ; but, "Deil's in the wife," the Liddesdale farmer exclaims, as he shakes off his wife's embrace, though gently and with a look of

great affection ; “ Deil’s in ye, Ailie—d’ye no see the stranger gentleman ? ” Ailie turns to make her apology—“ Troth, I was sae weel pleased to see the gudeman, that —,” and anon there is on Dandie’s part another bluff “ Whisht ! whisht ! gudewife,” with a smack that had much more affection than ceremony in it. Then streams in a whole tide of white-headed urchins, some from the stable, where they had been seeing Dumble, and giving him a welcome home with part of their four-hour scones ; others from the kitchen, where they had been listening to auld Elspeth’s tales and ballads ; and the youngest half-naked, out of bed, all roaring to see daddy, and effecting a panharmonic, not to say discordant, diapason of tumultuous delight.

Half the charm of home has been said to lie in the sense of contrast, of escape from the business, even from the pleasure, the distractions of the day ; for which reason the keenest enjoyment of home is found, not in the man who is always there, but in the man whose days are spent away from it. Home may be, for instance, to the country parson, the general atmosphere of his life, but it is denied that he tastes much of its more positive and concentrated delights. It is the City merchant, or the barrister of Lincoln’s Inn, for whom is claimed a genuine appreciation of this more positively pronounced pleasure ; the busy man, all whose real manhood is hung up with his great coat on the peg behind the office door, and who

at the stroke of five makes a rush for the train, and whose whole nature seems to change as he leaves his business self in the office and whirls away "home." The light and warmth of his own fireside, the voices of his children, blend themselves with the freshness of the country lanes, and the last glory of the sunset as it streams through the coppice. "The girls come running to him with a kiss of welcome at the gate ; a face yet dearer waits quietly for him in the garden ; baby 'crows' to him from his nurse's arms." For banker and barrister, as well as yeoman and boor, have the sense, the common sense, of enjoyment, in wending homewards at nightfall, and feeling themselves at home for the night.

Characteristic of Wordsworth in every line, even as the lines and lineaments of his face, is the description in his longest poem of the wedded pair who in childless solitude dwelt high on the mountain, in a house of stones collected on the spot, which bore unshaken the assaults of their most dreaded foe, the strong South-west in anger blowing from the distant sea ; within which solitary hut the dame beguiled by labour the winter's day,—

" Until the expected hour at which her mate  
From the far-distant quarry's vault returns,  
And by his converse crowns a silent day  
With evening cheerfulness."

*The picture of her the grey-haired Wanderer of the Excursion* draws, is one to be remembered, as

“ on that aëry height,  
Bearing a lantern in her hand, she stood,  
Or paced the ground—to guide her husband home,  
By that unwearied signal, kenned afar;  
An anxious duty! which the lofty site,  
Traversed but by a few irregular paths,  
Imposes, whensoe'er untoward chance  
Detains him after his accustomed hour  
Till night lies black upon the ground.”

### III.

#### *SHADOWS.*

THE shadows of the mind are likened in *Hyperion* to those of the body: in the morning of life they all lie behind us; at noon we trample them under feet; and in the evening they stretch long, broad, and deepening before us.

Mr. de Quincey remembers hearing a great man of his own time declare that no sense of conscious power had ever so vividly dilated his mind, nothing so like a revelation, as when one day, in broad sunshine, whilst yet a child, he discovered that his own shadow, which he had often angrily hunted, was no real existence, but a mere *hindering* of the sun's light from filling up the space screened by his own body. "The old grudge, which he cherished against this coy fugitive shadow, melted away in the rapture of the great discovery. To him the discovery had doubtless been originally half-suggested by explanations of his elders imperfectly comprehended. But in itself the distinction between the *affirmative* and the *negative* is a step perhaps the most costly in *effort* of any that the human mind is summoned to make."\* Locke, in one of his chapters on simple ideas, appeals to every

\* De Quincey, *Philosophy of Herodotus*, § I.

one's experience whether the shadow of a man, though it consists of nothing but the absence of light, and the more the absence of light is the more discernible is the shadow, does not, when a man looks at it, cause as clear and positive idea in his mind as a man himself though covered over with a clear scutcheon?" and the picture of a shadow is a positive thing," he adds. The spirits in Purgatory marvel at seeing the shadow cast by the body of Dante as the flame as he passes it:

"My passing shadow made the number'd flame  
Run wilder. As a strange & sight I mark'd  
That many a spirit marvel'd at his way.  
\* \* \* \* \*

"He seems," said they, "an unsubstantial frame."

Shadows says Dryden are but privations of the light: "yet when we walk they shoot before the sight: with us approach notice arise and fall; nothing themselves and yet expressing all." Swift's riddle on a shadow in a glass expands the theme: "By something formed I nothing am;" "in no place have I ever been, yet everywhere I may be seen," etc.,—though here, of course, the shadow is altogether of a different texture and essence. *Quod est a pluribus unum.*

The light is perhaps never felt more strongly as a Divine presence. George Eliot observes,—stirring all those inarticulate sensibilities which are our deepest life, than in those moments when it instantaneously

awakens the shadows. The remark is made in reference to Romola wending her way from Florence and its ties, on a bare wintry morning,—the scene one of leafless trees and sombre hills,—when presently the light burst forth with sudden strength, and shadows were thrown across the road, and it seemed that the sun was going to chase away the greyness. “A certain awe, which inevitably accompanied this most momentous act of her life, became a more conscious element in Romola’s feeling as she found herself in the sudden presence of the impalpable golden glory, and the long shadow of herself that was not to be escaped.” For some moments she is to be seen looking at nothing but the brightness on the path, and at her own shadow, tall and shrouded like a dread spectre. At the close of the impassioned interview between Zenobia and Hollingsworth in *The Blithedale Romance*, “Methought,” says the romancer, “as the declining sun threw Zenobia’s magnified shadow along the path, I beheld it tremulous.” The author pelts his own shadow with pebbles, in his seashore fantasy, when he sees it in the departing sunshine with its head upon the sea, and exults in what Osrick would pronounce “a hit, a very palpable hit!” And he claps his hands in triumph, and sees his shadow clapping its unreal hands, and claiming the triumph for itself. “What a simpleton must I have been all day, since my own shadow makes a mock of my fooleries.” Mr. Hawthorne was the very man to discourse on

shadows, and one almost wonders he has not made more of them in his shadowy stories and sketches, first and last. In *Transformation* they do, indeed, come like themselves and so depart. "Three shadows!" exclaims Miriam, by moonshine, as she leans over the stone-brim of the fountain's basin, the Fountain of Trevi,—"three separate shadows, all so black and heavy that they sink in the water." Her own is one. There they lie on the bottom, as if all three were drowned together. The shadow on her right is Donatello; him she knows by his curls, and the turn of his head. But her left hand companion perplexes her; a shapeless mass, as indistinct as the premonition of calamity. And such a premonition that blurred shadow too assuredly is. Chapter after chapter it is the same sad story; wherever she goes she finds her Shadow go too; if she passes into a house for a visit, when she comes out she finds her Shadow waiting for her in the street. In that fountain scene she is in the mood to echo the utterance of Shakspeare's Gloster:

" — Shadows to-night  
Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard,  
Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers."

Shadows in Shakspeare, as in nature, are of all sorts, grave and gay, definite and indefinite. Now we have Malvolio yonder in the sun, practising behaviour to his own shadow, this half-hour: "observe him,

for the love of mockery." Now we have Poins obeying the mad Prince's summons, with a prompt "I am your shadow, my lord ; I'll follow you." Now again it is Shadow the recruit, made a shadowy butt for Falstaff's very substantial wit. "Do you like him, Sir John ?" asks Shallow ; and the fat knight answers, "Shadow will serve for summer,—prick him ;—for we have a number of shadows to fill up the muster-book." Ay marry, let Sir John have Simon Shadow to sit under ; he's like to be a cold soldier. Or the shadows may be of the kind apologized for by Theseus, in mitigation of Hippolyta's judgment on the Pyramus and Thisbe performances : "The best in this kind are but shadows ;" and Puck begins *his* apologetics with the hypothesis, in character and keeping with the duke's figure, "If we shadows have offended." But we must not further multiply citations from one author, so early in the chapter, lest, very long before the end of it be reached, the reader say, "I am half-sick of shadows," with the Lady of Shalott.

From the greatest of Elizabethan dramatists turn for the nonce to Elizabeth herself. She has left us this stanza among others of her versifying :

" My care is like my shadow in the sun,  
Follows me flying, flies when I pursue it ;  
Stands and lies by me ; does what I have done ;  
This too familiar care does make me rue it ;  
No means I find to rid him from my breast,  
Till by the end of things it be supprest."

It is only of day-dreamland that the poet of the Irish melodies can tell his dear, that,

“While ev’ry joy that glads our sphere  
 Hath still some shadow hov’ring near,  
 In this new world of ours, my dear,  
 Such shadows will all be omitted ;—  
 Unless they’re like that graceful one,  
 Which, when thou’rt dancing in the sun,  
 Still near thee, leaves a charm upon  
 Each spot where it hath flitted.”

That is a quaint conceit in the Verses to her Husband of an anonymous lady of the seventeenth century, bidding him not to wear mourning for her, not even a black ring :—

“But this bright diamond, let it be  
 Worn in remembrance of me,  
 And when it sparkles in your eye,  
 Think ‘tis my shadow passeth by :  
 For why? More bright you shall me see,  
 Than that, or any gem can be.”

Her contemporary, the incomparable Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle, has a telling picture of Melancholy, who hates the light, and is in darkness found ;

“Or sits with blinking lamps, or tapers small,  
 Which various shadows make against the wall.”

—Anne, Countess of Winchelsea, in her *Noc-*  
*erie*, of the “loosed horse” that comes  
 —through the meads,—

“ Whose stealing pace and lengthen’d shade we fear,  
Till torn-up forage in his teeth we hear.”

Cowper recognised what there is of ludicrous in the grotesque dimensions and disproportions of a man’s shadow under slanting sunshine: his own, spindling into longitude immense, provokes him to a smile, in spite of gravity, and sage remark that he is but himself a fleeting shade.

“ With eye askance  
I view the muscular proportioned limb  
Transform’d to a lean shank. The shapeless pair,  
As they design’d to mock me, at my side  
Take step for step ; and as I near approach  
The cottage, walk along the plaster’d wall,  
Preposterous sight ! the legs without the man.”

Mrs. Piozzi cites, in self-application, during a mood of nervous fancy, the stanza,—

“ Strong and more strong her terrors rose,  
Her shadow did the nymph appal ;  
She trembled at her own long nose,  
It look’d so long against the wall.”

Wordsworth’s May morning picture is a pretty one, of lambs that gambol, each with his shadow at his side, “ varying its shape wherever he may run.” Mrs. Browning pictures the simple goat-herd, between Alp and sky, who sees his shadow “ in that awful tryst,” dilated to a giant’s on the mist, but without esteeming his own stature larger by the apparent image. In her *Romaunt of Margaret*, the lady’s shadow lies upon the running river, and lieth no less in its quiet-

ness, for that which resteth never ; though anon, albeit herself neither moving, nor dreaming, she sees her shadow no longer laid in rest upon the stream :

“ It shaketh without wind, it parteth from the tide,  
It standeth upright in the cleft moonlight—it sitteth at her  
side ! ”

Mr. Tennyson makes the shadow of the poplar fall bodingly upon Mariana’s bed, across her brow ; and we see the shadow of his Miller’s Daughter cross the blind, and the long shadow of her chair flits across into the night ; while again in his *Œnone*, “ the lizard, with his shadow on the stone, rests like a shadow.” In Hood’s *Tale of a Trumpet*, it is a fateful moment for the dame, when, without hearing the creak of the opening door, nor yet the fall of the foot on the floor, she yet

“ —saw the shadow that crept on her gown,  
And turn’d its skirt of a darker brown.”

Miss Fanny Fudge’s stanzas addressed to her own shadow, “ or, Why ?—What ?—How ? ” are familiar to the readers of Moore ; but these dwindle daily :

“ Dark comrade of my path ! while earth and sky  
Thus wed their charms, in bridal light array’d,  
Why, in this bright hour, walk’st thou ever nigh,  
Black’ning my footsteps with thy length of shade—  
Dark comrade, WHY ?

“ Thou mimic shape that, ’mid these flowery scenes,  
Glidest beside me o’er each sunny spot,

Sadd'ning them as thou goest—say what means  
 So dark an adjunct to so bright a lot—  
 Grim goblin, WHAT?

“Still, as to pluck sweet flowers I bend my brow,  
 Thou benderest, too—thou risest when I rise ;  
 Say, mute mysterious Thing ! how is’t that thou  
 Thus comest between me and those blessed skies—  
 Dire shadow, How?”

The Montagnais Indians, according to Paul le Jeune,\* a Jesuit missionary among them in the seventeenth century, believe in a spiritual life after death for every material thing that has existed upon earth : the soul of every existing object is connected with its *shadow*, and all the shadows of material existences find their way, when detached from life on this earth, to the happy region near the setting sun. “On his journey to this new home the soul or shadow of the Indian hunter marches during the night on the shadows of snow-shoes, and kills for sustenance the souls or shadows of the game he has hunted in life with the shadows of his earthly weapons.”† An imaginative painter might make

\* Quoted by Mr. H. Y. Hind, in his *Explorations in Labrador*.

† The Jesuit father attempted to involve the Indian doctors who were expounding their creed, in a metaphysical puzzle, by inquiring what became of the shadow-souls of the game thus killed in the shadow land. He was met with a very sufficiently satisfactory reply : “Be still. You are talking about things which you do not understand. If I had been in that country, I would have answered you.”

something wild and eerie of such a subject. Painters' shadows deserve a chapter to themselves—not forgetting the one cast by the form of Maclige's monk over Caxton's Bible, from which he looks scowlingly away at the printer; or the blundering ones imputed to Turner by Professor Ruskin and others. But there is no place for them here. Pass we on to some parting glimpses of what may be called the miscellanies of umbratic literature—a phrase that may, perhaps, give umbrage, as well as profess to take it.

There are shadows in play, poem, and romance, that cling to one's memory. The shadow that frightens Duke Ferdinand, in the fifth act of the *Duchess of Malfi*,—it is his guilty own. “Look! What's that? It follows me.” Malatesta tells him it is nothing—’tis his shadow; and the duke prays that it haunt him not; but that entreaty, he is told, is

“ Impossible, if you move, and in the sun.

*Ferd.* I will throttle it (*throws himself on the ground*).

*Mal.* Oh, my lord, you are angry with nothing.

*Ferd.* You are a fool:

How is’t possible I should catch my shadow  
Unless I fall on’t?”

That second shadow observed by Francis Osbaldistone in Die Vernon's room: “The passage of the shadows between the lights and the casements was twice repeated, as if to satisfy me that my observation served me truly,”—whereby hangs a tale. The shadow that is watched by Josephine and Rose de

Beaurepaire, in *White Lies*,—a man's shadow, that makes for the tree they find purses in, and that takes off its hat, and wipes its brow with a handkerchief, having walked fast, poor thing. Randal Leslie's dark shadow falls over the clear mirror of the fountain just as Riccabocca has said, “All here is so secure from evil!—the waves of the fountain are never troubled like those of the river.” The shadow attendant on Madame Defarge and her party, in the *Tale of Two Cities*, seems to fall so threatening and dark on the child Lucie, that her mother instinctively kneels on the ground beside her, and holds the little one to her breast: the shadow attendant on Madame Defarge and her party seems then to fall, threatening and dark, on both the mother and the child. Upon the same author's Haunted Man, the shadows that twilight has released, close in like mustering swarms of ghosts—lowering in corners of rooms, and frowning out from behind half-opened doors; dancing on the floors and walls and ceilings while the fire is low, to withdraw like ebbing waters when it springs into a blaze. They are described as fantastically mocking the shapes of household objects, making the nurse an ogress, the rocking-horse a monster, the wondering child, half-scared and half-amused, a stranger to itself,—the very tongs upon the hearth a straddling giant with his arms a-kimbo, evidently smelling the blood of Englishmen, and wanting to grind people's bones

to make his bread. Joseph de Maistre's Eugene is one day found, while a child, busy blowing with all his might of breath the fire in an unlighted room, and being asked what this was for, "Je travaille," he says, "pour faire revenir mon *nègre*,"—for that is the title by which he designates his shadow. The boy is of a kind to delight in its distortions and disfigurements even,—if not to exult in their misrepresentation of him, as the camel in Sir A. Helps's fable exults in an accurate presentment of her deformity. Horse and camel, in that fable, are cropping *con amore* the green herbage near a fountain, and their shadows lie strongly and darkly upon the grass. "How beautiful," says the horse, "is that dark form which moves as I move; what grace, what symmetry it shows! I can hardly eat for looking at it." "It is well enough," quoth the camel, "but look at this one which moves with me. It has all the symmetry and the grace of the other; and then, too, it has that pretty little hump on its back." *Mutatis nominibus, de nobis fabula narratur.*

In *The Dead Secret* we see the mysterious house-keeper's shadow steal darkly over the bright picture which the doctor had been admiring, till it stretches obliquely across the counterpane, and its dusky edges touch the figures of the young mother and child, so that Rosamond exclaims in a panic, "Are you woman or ghost?" Mrs. Gamp, quieting her patient, is said to have presented on the wall "the shadow of a

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gigantic night constable, struggling with a prisoner." Florence Dombey, could she have stood within that ugly dark room of "good Mrs. Brown's," whose gigantic and distorted image, by scanty firelight, was thrown half upon the wall behind her, half upon the roof above, would have seen in that shadow no more grotesque and exaggerated a presentment of the truth than was her childish recollection of the uncanny crone. When Louisa Gradgrind and her brother, in *Hard Times*, are discussing her proposed match with Bounderby, their shadows are defined upon the wall, but those of the high presses in the room are all blended together on the wall and on the ceiling, as if the brother and sister were overhung by a dark cavern; or a fanciful imagination "might have made it out to be the shadow of their subject, and of its lowering association with their future." Richard Marwood, for eight years past confined as a lunatic in a county asylum, is described as knowing bitterly well the shape of every shadow that falls on the white-washed wall, and as telling the hour by the falling of it: he knows that at such a time on a summer's evening, the shadows of the iron bars of the window will make long black lines across the ground, and mount and mount, dividing the wall as if it were in panels, till they meet, and absorbing altogether the declining light, surround and absorb him too, till he is in the dark once more. He knows, too, that at such a time on the grey winter's morning, these

same shadows will be the first indications of the coming light ; that from the thick gloom of the dead night they will break out upon the wall, with strips of glimmering, cold, and early day between, only enough like light to show the blackness of the shade. “ He has been sometimes mad enough and wretched enough to pray that these shadows might fall differently, . . . to break this bitter and deadly monotony.” The Shadow of *A Strange Story* is luminous with a light that never was on sea or shore. Akin to it in weird supernaturalism, not in luminosity, is the one we read of in the ballad,—

“ Around it, and round, he had ventured to go,  
But no form that had life threw that stamp on the snow.”

Mr. Gryll, of Gryll Grange, quotes this and other instances in which the shadow has an outline, without a visible form to throw it ; but he then cites an instance of shadows without distinguishable forms. A young chevalier was riding through a forest of pines, noted for fearful adventures, when a strange voice called on him to stop. He did not stop, and the stranger jumped up behind him. He tried to look back, but could not turn his head. They emerged into a glade, where he hoped to see in the moonlight the outline of the unwelcome form. But “unaccountable shadows fell around, unstamped with delineations of themselves.” This is *atra Cura* seated *post Equitem* with a vengeance !

Chamisso's story of Peter Schlemihl, the man who sold his shadow, and became to his cost a shadowless man, is one that strikes every reader, and tells its own tale in a very telling way, whether the story-teller may or may not have had some special end to serve, of a moral or didactic kind. Some expositors, for instance, infer the moral to be, that wealth, power, and splendour, such as Peter secured when he accepted the stranger's offer, and saw that "little man in black" stoop down, sweep his shadow from the ground, roll it up, and put it in his pocket, in exchange for an inexhaustible purse, bestow no real happiness, without some nearer, closer tie, which, like our shadow, is always at one with us ; but as this second self, it has been objected, is valuable only when it clings to us in gloom and obscurity, and not like our earthly shadow, when the sun shines on it alone, the suggested exposition is not accounted of much value.\*

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\* Fernan Caballero takes notice that the leading idea of *Peter Schlemihl* is embodied in an Andalusian adage about studying on the Crimson Rock, where "no end of ideas can be acquired." The Crimson Rock is where the Marquis of Villeua studied with the enemy of souls, who every day took a black board, and the lesson appeared written out, and in this way the Marquis learned so fast that he came to know more than his master, and his master grew so jealous that he let the board fall, meaning to kill the Marquis ; but the Marquis had smelled fire, so he slipped aside in the nick of time, and the board only caught his shadow, so that the Marquis was left without one ever after.

The Black Dwarf's neighbours insisted that he was never less alone than when alone, because from the heights which commanded the moor at a distance, passengers often discovered a person at work with this dweller of the desert, in the toil of building his little cottage; and such a figure was also occasionally to be seen sitting beside Elshie at the door, walking with him on the heath, or helping him to fetch water from his well. Earnscliff explained this phenomenon by supposing it to be the Dwarf's shadow. But no : "Deil a shadow has he," quoth Hobbie Elliott, a strenuous defender of the opinion in vogue ; "he's ower far in wi' the Auld Ane to have a shadow." Lamartine in *Jocelyn* speaks of

"Un corps qui ne répand point d'ombre sur ses pas."

But that is notably an exception to the rule laid down in another canto, where the poet refers to

"—l'ombre qu'avec nous le soleil voit marcher,  
Sœur du corps, qu'à nos pas on ne peut arracher."

Only a little man in black, with literally no end of a long purse, can *arracher* that else inseparable associate. And, on the tale's showing, as invaluable as inseparable. A shadowless city, even, may be as little matter for envy as the shadowless man ; art-critics complain, for example, of the new quarter of Munich, with its handsome array of shops, hotels, and public buildings, that these structures are singularly

wanting in shadow ; the whole city, indeed, has been said to be in the position of “ the unhappy man who is supposed to have sold his shadow ” to the arch-enemy ; the architecture of the Ludwig era being, in fact, shadowless,—so much it wants substance and relief,—so thin, flat, and forceless is it, as to resemble, they say, a card-built house. Our Queen Bess would not allow a shadow in her picture, arguing, like a Chinese, as Hartley Coleridge has it, or like a choppologic, that shade is only an accident, and no true property of body. And talking of shadows in pictures, marked admiration has been expressed for a design by Gustave Doré, of two knights fighting a deadly fight in a deep glen by moonlight, in which the artist signalized his knowledge of the importance of duplication ; for the shadows of the fighters seem to fight also upon the earth, just as Leonardo da Vinci makes the horses, as well as the men, fight each other in the famous Battle of the Standard.

Shelley's Everlasting, or Wandering Jew, Ahasuerus, is a woe-worn wight, whose “ inessential figure cast no shade upon the golden floor ” it trod, or ought to tread. Chrysodr in Landor's Hellenics has a grim Schlemihlistic sort of experience to relate of himself, when once “ fronting the furious lustre of the sun,” and abasing his eyes to the ground, to survey his shadow,

“ ——strange and horrid to relate !  
My very shadow almost disappeared ! ”

the restoration of which he demands in words sufficiently energetic. Dante is overcome with apprehensions, in the third canto of the Purgatory, at perceiving no shadow except that cast by his own body, and inferring that his guide has deserted him. Virgil explains that he had a body once, and that it cast a shadow in its time, but has long been lying buried in Naples, on removal from Brundusium, and his spiritual body casts no shade.

“Nor thou  
Marvel, if before me no shadow fall,  
More than that in the skyey element  
One ray obstructs not other.”

When from Purgatory we get to Paradise (canto xxi.), the record is that “Shadow none, the vast interposition of such numerous flight [of angels] cast, from above. . . . For, through the universe, wherever merited, celestial light glides freely, and no obstacle prevents.” As in the *Paradise Lost*, book iii., where sight, however far and wide surveying, finds no obstacle, “nor shade, but all sunshine.” The story of the Prince in Mr. Tennyson’s *Princess*, starts from another story, an ancient legend in his house: some sorcerer, whom a far-off grandsire burnt because he cast no shadow, had foretold, when dying, that none of all that house should know the shadow from the substance, and that one should come to fight with shadows and to fall. The *Ingoldsby Legends* have

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their ethical application of the shadow sale in German romance :

“Remorse for temptation to which you have yielded, is  
A shadow you can't sell as Peter Schlemihl did his ;  
It haunts you for ever—in bed and at board.”

Nor is remorse the only haunter of this kind ; in the teaching of *Sartor Resartus*, the pilgrim of which could find no healing, resort he to what fountain or saint's well he might : in strange countries, as in the well-known ; in savage deserts, as in the press of corrupt civilization, it was ever the same : how could your Wanderer escape from—*his own shadow* ?

“Man casts upon this earth, whereon he stands,  
The formidable shadow of himself.”

Every man has his own shadow, his very own. But no less true is it that for every man another Shadow is waiting, the Shadow of Death.

From April on to April, through four sweet years, went two bosom friends, and “glad at heart from May to May,” but where the path they walked began to “slant the fifth autumnal slope,” and they descended, hopefully gazing onward, “There sat the shadow feared of man,” who broke their fair companionship ; for one was taken, and the other left. And he that was left sang *In Memoriam* of him that was taken, —borne away whither, that sweet singer says,

“——I could not see  
 Nor follow, tho' I walk in haste ;  
 And think, that somewhere in the waste  
 The Shadow sits and waits for me.”

Yet a little while and *me premet nox, fabuleque Manes, et domus exilis Plutonia.* Mendelssohn was nearing the end, though not yet stricken down, when he said to a friend, “I feel as if some one were lying on the watch for me, and saying ‘Stop ! no farther !’ (*Halt! nicht weiter!*)” As a stanza in *The Wanderer* has it,—

“For still, where I wander or linger, for ever  
 Comes a skeleton hand that is beckoning for me ;  
 And still, dogging my footsteps, life’s long Never-never  
 Pursues me, wherever my footsteps may be.”

From the same pen in a later poem comes what the Arabian tells the Emperor, at the siege of Constantinople, Behind all noises, and men, and deeds, and blaze of kings, princes, and paladins, and potentates,

“An immense solitary spectre waits.  
 It has no shape ; it has no sound ; it has  
 No place ; it has no time ; it is, and was,  
 And will be : it is never more, nor less,  
 Nor glad, nor sad. Its name is Nothingness.  
 . . . This Spectre saith, ‘I wait.’

• • • • •  
 Behind all laughter, and behind all tears,  
 The Arabian said, this shapeless Spectre waits,  
 And no man knoweth what it meditates.”

Otherwise and more Christianly conceived is the

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philosophy expounded in another Siege of Constantinople (Joanna Baillie's *Constantine Palæologus*) to one who thus recognizes its import,—

“ Ay, thou wouldst cheer me, and I will be cheer'd.  
There reigns above who casts His dark *shade* o'er us,  
Mantling us on our way to glorious light.”

But as a recently deceased metaphysician has said, of the two causes of distress, the loss of our friends or relations gives far greater pain than the anticipation of our own decease ; this last being a sentiment that occasionally throws its shadow over the stream of life, but the unarrested stream goes on, and the shadow comes and goes, and seems to brighten that stream by the contrast that it brings. Sometimes indeed the shadow comes, and *not* goes : takes its silent session on the threshold and there waits. As with Talbot Bulstrode, in a popular fiction: what was the dark cloud which he saw brooding so fatally over the horizon ? He dared not think what it was ; he dared not even acknowledge its presence ; but “ there was a sense of terror in his breast that told him the shadow was there.” The paramount pain, however, of knowing and feeling that, if not on the very door-step, at least somewhere in the waste, the shadow sits and waits, not for me, but for mine, for one dearer than one's own life, is vividly set forth in two domestic poems, by two living poets, one English, the other a New Englander. To take the latter first. The

closing book of Dr. Holland's *Kathrina* begins with dread record of a guest in the narrator's house—a guest unbidden—that stays without a welcome from his host, who hears his tireless footsteps in the lonely halls, in the chill hours of night; and in the day they climb the stairs or loiter through the rooms in careless freedom.

“Ever when I turned  
I caught a glimpse of him. His shadow stalked . . .  
Between me and the light, and fled before  
My restless feet, or followed close behind.  
Whene'er I bent above the couch that held  
My fading wife, though looking not, I knew  
That he was bending from the other side,  
And mocking me.”

Familiar grown, at last the Shadow comes more closely,—comes and sits with the moody man through hours of reverie, and whispers in his shrinking ears such fearful words as make him sick and cold. Sits and waits—waits for his prey, and will not hear of substitution, will not accept of him instead of her. In the other poem referred to, Mr. Coventry Patmore's *Angel in the House*, the narrator tells how

“—musing brought  
A dream that shook my house of clay,  
And, in my humbled heart, I thought,  
To me there yet may come a day  
When o'er my head great waters roll,  
\* \* \* \* \*  
And this the single vestige seen  
Of comfort, earthly or divine,

My sorrow some day must have been  
Her portion, had it not been mine.  
Then I who knew, from watching life,  
That blows foreseen are slow to fall,  
Rehearsed the losing of a wife,  
And faced its terrors each and all.  
The self-chastising fancy show'd  
The coffin with its ghastly breath  
The innocent sweet face, that owed  
None of its innocence to death ;  
The lips that used to laugh ; the knell  
That bade the world beware of mirth ;  
The heartless and intolerable  
Indignity of 'earth to earth ;'  
At morn, remembering by degrees  
That she I dream'd about was dead ;  
Love's still recurrent jubilees,  
The days that she was born, won, wed :  
The duties of my life the same,  
Their meaning for the feelings gone ;  
Friendship impertinent, and fame  
Disgusting ; and, more harrowing none,  
Small household troubles fall'n to me."

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## IV.

### *A MOONLIGHT RIDE WITH WORDSWORTH.*

THE entity of Wordsworth's Lucy is a subject of speculation and dispute; but here and now *non disputandum*. The poet's moonlight ride to her cottage, and the sensitiveness of apprehensive misgiving with which, as the moon dropped, he neared it, are the text of this present chapter of annotations. She bloomed fresh and fair as a rose in June, at the time of the visit, so that cause for apprehension there was none. The ride was by evening moonlight; and the rider kept his eye upon the moon "all over the wide lea." That eye was not indeed in a fine frenzy rolling; but as the eye of lover and poet in one it was so far "lunatic" as to become affected, or infected, unawares, by that fixed gaze. Horse and horseman reached in due time the familiar orchard-plot; and, as they climb the hill, "the sinking moon to Lucy's cot came near and nearer still."

"In one of those sweet dreams I slept,  
Kind Nature's gentlest boon?  
And all the while my eyes I kept  
On the descending moon.

My horse moved on: hoof after hoof  
He raised, and never stopped:

When down behind the cottage roof,  
At once, the bright moon dropped.

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide  
Into a lover's head !  
'O mercy !' to myself I cried,  
'If Lucy should be dead !'"

Sir Walter Scott makes special reference to this suggestive lyric in that passage of the *Heart of Mid-Lothian* which relates the anxious visit of Jeanie Deans to the cottage of Reuben Butler, when pursuing her solitary and momentous journey to the south. She had looked anxiously for Butler in the court-house at her sister's trial. "The wild and wayward thoughts, which Wordsworth has described as rising in an absent lover's imagination, suggested, as the only explanation of his absence, that Butler must be very ill." And so much had this wrought on *her* imagination, that when she approached the cottage, in which the Libberton schoolmaster occupied one small room, and which had been pointed out to her by a maiden with a milk-pail on her head, she trembled, we read, at anticipating the answer she might receive on inquiring for him.

In the *Black Dwarf*, again, we see Hobbie Elliot pursuing his journey, harassed by those oppressive and indistinct fears that all was not right at home, which men usually term a presentiment of misfortune, ere he reached that top of the bank from which he could look down on his own habitation, met by his

"auld nurse" Annapple, with a brow like a tragic volume; and the despair in her look was so evident as to deprive even him of the power of asking the cause. We are reminded of the old ballad of Edom o' Gordon,—

"O, then bespyed her ain dear lord,  
As he cam owre the lea;  
He sied his castle all in a blaze,  
Sae far as he could see.

Then sair, O sair, his mind misgave,  
And all his heart was wae . . . ."

Fiction teems with illustrations, more or less to the purpose. There is Roderick Random, in the antepenultimate chapter of his *Adventures*, "fired with all the eagerness of passion," taking post by night to rejoin his Narcissa: "Neither were my reflections free from apprehensions, that sometimes intervened in spite of all my hope. . . . My thoughts were even maddened with the fear of her death;" so that when he arrived in the dark at the house, he had not for some time courage to desire admittance, lest the shock of dismal tidings might await him. Of the released captives to whom a chapter is devoted in *Le Diable-Boiteux*, not all, we read, are equally enraptured with their regained freedom: joyous as many are at the prospect of rejoining their families, there are others who are disquieted by the misgiving that during their absence events more cruel than

slavery itself may have saddened their homes. The song of O'Ruark has its echoes in every age and clime :

"The valley lay smiling before me,  
Where lately I left her behind;  
Yet I trembled, and something hung o'er me,  
That sadden'd the joy of my mind.  
I look'd for the lamp which, she told me,  
Should shine, when her Pilgrim return'd;  
But, though darkness began to infold me,  
No lamp from the battlements burn'd!"

De Quincey somewhere remarks of sea-faring men, returning home after a long voyage, that the interruption habitually of all ordinary avenues of information about the fate of their dearest relatives ; the consequent agitation which must often possess those who are re-entering upon home waters ; and the sudden burst, upon stepping ashore, of heart-shaking news in long accumulated arrears,—are circumstances which dispose the mind to look out for relief towards signs and omens as one way of breaking the shock by dim anticipations. Mrs. Inchbald, in her story of *Nature and Art*, is true to both when she describes the younger Henry's return from banishment, and tells us that often as he had reckoned, with impatient wishes, the hours which were passed at a distance from her he loved, no sooner was his disastrous voyage at an end, no sooner had his feet trod upon the shore of Britain, than a thousand wounding fears made him almost doubt whether it was happiness or

misery he had gained by his arrival. If Rebecca were living, he knew it must be happiness; for his heart dwelt with confidence on her faith—her unchanging sentiments. “But death might probably have ravished from his hopes what no mortal power could have done.” And thus the lover, it is said, creates a rival in every ill, rather than suffer his fears to remain inanimate. “Possessed by apprehensions, . . . young Henry, as he entered the well-known village, feared every sound he heard would convey information of Rebecca’s death. He saw the parsonage house at a distance, but dreaded to approach it, lest Rebecca should no longer be an inhabitant.” And when at length he plucked up courage enough to enter the churchyard, in his way to it, he moved along slowly and tremblingly, stopping to read here and there a gravestone inscription, as mild, instructive conveyers of intelligence, to which he could attend with more resignation than to any other reporter. Lovell Beddoes, in one of his Poetic Fragments, has a simile about

“— seamen sailing near  
Some island-city where their dearest dwell,  
Who needs must guess in sweet imagining,—  
Alas ! too sweet, doubtful, and melancholy,—  
Which light is glittering from their loved one’s home.”

As the light is extinguished in the chamber of Henrietta Temple, Ferdinand Armaine feels for a moment as if his sun was set for ever. There seemed

to be now no evidence of her existence. Would tomorrow ever come? And, if it came, would the rosy hours indeed bring her in their radiant car? What if this night she died? "He shuddered at this wild imagination. Yet it might be; such dire calamities had been." And such fond and wayward thoughts haunted him like evil spirits as he took his way over the common. Next day we have a glimpse of him again, wending his way along the hedgerows—starting at a sound, which was but the spring of a wandering bird; turning pale at the murmur of a remote mill-wheel; stopping and leaning on a rustic gate with a panting heart—a heart "palpitating with delicate suspense." There is a scene on board the *Argus*, in another fiction, where a middle-aged passenger from Sydney confesses to a companion, as the vessel nears old England, how misgivings multiply, and how "for the last month of the voyage, day by day, and hour by hour, my heart sinks, and my hopeful fancies fade away, and I dread the end as much as if I *knew* that I was going to England to attend a funeral." General Rolleston, in Mr. Charles Reade's story, needs all his fortitude as he nears the desert island on which his daughter has been wrecked: suppose her dead, and buried there: suppose the fatal disease with which she had sailed, to have been accelerated by hardships, and that he would be in time only to receive her last sigh:—all these misgivings crowded on him the moment he drew so near to the object, which

had looked all brightness so long as it was unattainable. "He sat, pale and brave, in the boat ; but his doubts and fears were greater than his hope." The fears and the hopes alternate, but the fears preponderate,—as in the case of him who sang Fair Yoland with the yellow hair :

"Ere I lie down—my dreams are drear  
First comes a slowly-creeping fear,  
Like icy dew, that seems to glue  
My limbs to earth, and freeze them thro' ;  
Then a long shriek on a wild wind,  
And 'O,' I think, 'if her's it were,  
And I a murder'd corpse should find  
Fair Yoland with the yellow hair !'

\* \* \* \* \*

Then, on the brink of hope, I shrink  
With shuddering strange, the while I think  
'O what if, after body and mind  
Consumed in toil, and all my care,  
Not a corpse, but a bride, I find  
Fair Yoland with the yellow hair !'"

In Mr. Dickens's penultimate work there is a carriage ride of wistful friends, alongside the solemn river, stealing away by night, as all things steal away, by day as by night, "so quietly yielding to the attraction of the loadstone rock of Eternity ;" and the nearer they drew to the chamber where Eugene lay, the more they feared that they might find his wanderings done. In a much earlier story he had elaborated the sensations of a returning lover—tears in his eyes as from the chaise he caught the light of

Marion's home, and his heart throbbing so violently that he could hardly bear his happiness: on foot he crept swiftly, softly to the house,—where awaited him a reception that prompted at once the affrighted query, "Is she dead?" Clayton, in *Dred*, as he approaches the home of his betrothed, becomes sensible of that shuddering dread which, says his author, all of us may remember to have had, in slight degrees, when returning home, after a long absence, under a vague expectation of misfortune, to which the mind can set no definite limits. "When Clayton entered the boundaries of the plantation, he inquired eagerly of the first person he met, for the health of its mistress. 'Thank God, she is yet alive!' said he. 'It was but a dream after all!'" Compare the *songe de bonheur* of Chateaubriand's Chactas, as brief as it had been vivid; his surprise at not seeing Atala run to greet him; "Je ne sais quelle soudaine horreur me saisit. . . . Je restai au dehors plein de terreur." Vividly effective is Mr. Tennyson's simile of

"—— a man to whom a dreadful loss  
Falls in a far land, and he knows it not,  
But coming back he learns it, and the loss  
So pains him that he sickens nigh to death."

Mackenzie, in his *Man of Feeling*, has a picture of a father whose heart throbs with the anticipation of joy and welcome as he approaches his "little dwelling,"—the road being shortened by the dreams of happiness he cherishes: "It began to be dark as I

reached the house ; I alighted from my horse,"—and then comes revelation of disaster. In the same author's *Story of La Roche* we see the philosophic hero of it benighted on his way to a second visit to La Roche's dwelling : a light gleams on the lake, seeming to proceed from the house, and moving slowly along, glimmering through the trees : he tries to suppose it some piece of bridal merriment, for Ma'moiselle's nuptials are the event of the day, and he pushes on his horse that he may be a spectator of the scene : the light turns out to be from funeral torches. "If Lucy should be dead!" Ma'moiselle La Roche is dead.

Campbell's Theodric, fast hurrying homeward, sleeps not by day or night, until, launched at sea, he dreams "that his soul's saint clung to him on a bridge of ice, pale, faint, o'er cataracts of blood.

"Awake, he bless'd  
The shore, nor hope left utterly his breast,  
Till reaching home, terrific omen ! there  
The straw-laid street preluded his despair."

Charles de Bernard's Sordeuil lands in a storm ; and, "superstition de marin, ou plutôt pressentiment trop juste, ce triste orage d'hiver qui accueillait mon retour me fit éprouver une anxiété jusqu'alors inconnue." Not thus, he says to himself, should the wanderer return to his home ; and he could have willingly paid any price for one ray of sunshine. His step is

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hastened by *une inquiétude indéfinissable*; he bounds along the streets which lead to his house; arrived there, he for a while is afraid to knock at the door\*—and only an unforeseen incident puts an end to his irresolution. There is nothing of fiction, either as to form or substance, in this entry in Moore's Diary, referring to the daughter he was doomed to lose: “Arrived at Calne before five, and set off on foot for home. Felt most anxious as I approached the cottage, not knowing what might have happened since the day before yesterday. Could not bring myself to enter at the hall-door, but tapped at the back kitchen window, in order to know what I was to expect.” Applicable, in an enlarged sense, is what Plautus says, that

“—— Nimia est voluptas, si diu abfueris, a domo  
Domum si redieris, si tibi nulla est ægritudo animo obviam.”

The *si, si, si*, are of a sort to secure a sighing assent.

The story-teller of the strange and sombre story (more and more sibilants) of *Wuthering Heights*, making way to Hindley's house, is absorbed by the conjecture, “Supposing he should be dead!—The

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\* That is a touch of nature in Swift's *Journal to Stella*, where he records a visit to “poor little Harrison, the Queen's Secretary,”—another poet, Parnell, being his companion. “I told Parnell I was afraid to knock at the door; my mind misgave me. I knocked, and his man, in tears, told me his master was dead an hour before. Think what grief this is to me.”—*Journal to Stella*, Feb. 13, 1712-13.

nearer I got to the house, the more agitated I grew ; and on catching sight of it I trembled in every limb.” Devereux, in the romance which bears his name, ends one chapter and begins another with an account of his ride to the cottage of Isora, his secretly wedded wife, and speaks of it as a noticeable thing how much fear increases love ; meaning—for the aphorism requires explanation—how much we love, in proportion to our fear of losing (or even to our fear of injury overtaking) the beloved object : it is an instance of the reaction of the feelings—the love produces the fear, and the fear reproduces the love. “I never breathed, away from Isora, without trembling for her safety. . . . Whenever (and that was almost daily) I rode to the quiet and remote dwelling I had procured her, my heart beat so vehemently, and my agitation was so intense, that on arriving at the gate I have frequently been unable, for several minutes, to demand admittance.” Garcio, in Joanna Baillie’s tragedy of *The Separation*, disquiets himself in vain, when in sight of home, with conjectural apprehensions touching wife and child :

“An infant’s life !  
What is an infant’s life ? the chilly blast,  
That nips the blossom, o’er the cradle breathes,  
And child and dam like blighted sweetness fade.  
If this should be !—O dear, uncertain bliss !”

His instant exclamation to the first comer, who looks grave, is, “Something is wrong—I have nor wife nor

child!" albeit assurance follows that both are well. Molière's Scapin insists that however brief may have been a *père de famille's* absence from home, he ought to make up his mind to all sorts of distressful accidents to be discovered on his return, and therefore to figure to himself *en route* his wife dead, or his house burnt to the ground, at the very least. "Il doit promener son esprit sur tous les fâcheux accidents que son retour peut rencontrer, se figurer sa maison brûlée, . . . sa femme morte," etc. The burnt house is the Vicar of Wakefield's lot: "It was now near midnight that I came to knock at my door: all was still and silent: my heart dilated with unutterable happiness, when, to my amazement, I saw the house bursting out in a blaze of fire, and every aperture red with conflagration!" The late Mr. Leigh Hunt was often heard to say that he never left home to return at night without a dread lest he should find his house in flames. One of the Idylls of the King describes him returning o'er the plain that then began to darken under Camelot; whence the king looked up, calling aloud, "Lo there! the roofs of our great hall are rolled in thunder-smoke! Pray Heaven, they be not smitten by the bolt,"—and a page or two later we read—

"So to this hall full quickly rode the king,  
In horror lest the work by Merlin wrought,  
Dreamlike, should on the sudden vanish, wrapt  
In unremorseful folds of rolling fire."

The ninth chapter of Mr. Crabb Robinson's *Reminiscences* closes with the avowal of his indulgence, so he calls it, in "a little act of superstition," which may recall Scapin's *il doit promener son esprit*. It records his arrival at Bury, between one and two at night, and his hurrying to his brother's house : "I had not heard of my brother for some months ; and as a charm against any calamity to him or his family, I enumerated all possible misfortunes, with the feeling which I have had through life, that all calamities come unexpectedly ; and so I tried to ensure a happy meeting by thinking of 'all the ills that flesh is heir to.'" From the same feeling the poet of *The Angel in the House*, knowing, from what he noted in daily life, "that blows foreseen are slow to fall, rehearsed the losing of a wife, and faced its terrors each and all,"—in a passage elsewhere turned to use in this volume.

When Salathiel the immortal reaches the foot of the long ascent from which his dwelling is visible, he feels an impatience beyond restraint, and spurs up the hill to allay it. "How fine the ear becomes when quickened by the heart!" he exclaims, as home sounds appear to reach it ; and he pictures the dear group of household faces. The light thickens, and the intricacy of the forest impedes him ; so that, chafing at the delay, he springs from his horse, and tries his path through a thicket on foot, struggling onward, and listening with sharpened anxiety for every sound of home. The anxiety is all too fully ~~certified~~ by the event.

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One glance at Alphonso, in Southey's *Roderick*, on his way to Count Pedro's Castle :

“ Youth of heroic thought and high desire,  
'Tis not the spur of lofty enterprise  
That with unequal throbbing hurries now  
The unquiet heart, now makes it sink dismay'd ;  
'Tis not impatient joy which thus disturbs  
In that young breast the healthful spring of life ;  
Joy and ambition have forsaken him,  
His soul is sick with hope. So near his home,  
So near his mother's arms ; . . . alas ! perchance  
The long'd-for meeting may be yet far off  
As earth from heaven. Sorrow in these long months  
Of separation may have laid her low.”

Byron ceased his funning, and dropped his sneer, for one stanza at least, when describing Lambro's arrival at the summit of a hill which overlooked the white walls of his home :

“ He stopp'd.—What singular emotions fill  
Their bosoms who have been induced to roam !  
With fluttering doubts if all be well or ill—  
With love for many, and with fears for some ;  
All feelings which o'erleap the years long lost,  
And bring our hearts back to their starting-post.”

Wordsworth's Leonard and his brother — *The Brothers*—were the last of all their race : and now when Leonard, after long absence, had approached his home, his heart failed in him ; “ and, not venturing to inquire tidings of one so long and dearly loved, he to the solitary churchyard turned ; that, as he knew in what particular spot his family were laid, he thence might learn if still his brother lived, or to the pile

another grave was added." From him glance aside to track the steps of Enoch Arden, wending homeward—home—what home—had he a home? after so prolonged and cruel an absence :

"Then down the long street having slowly stolen,  
His heart foreshadowing all calamity,  
His eyes upon the stones, he reach'd the home  
Where Annie lived and loved him, and his babes  
In those far-off seven happy years were born ;  
But finding neither light nor murmur there  
(A bill of sale gleam'd thro' the drizzle) crept  
Still downward, thinking, 'Dead,—or dead to me !'"

Once more :—Mr. Coventry Patmore's comprehensive poem of household life and lives and loves shall furnish a terminal illustration of the theme of Wordsworth's moonlight ride to Lucy's cot :—the poet has been feigning advent calamity and rehearsing bereavement at its worst, and now he awakes, to wonder if there be realism in the dreamings after all ; it is a varied reading of *If Lucy should be dead!*

"O Heaven ! I cried, with chill alarm,  
'If this fantastic horror shows  
The feature of an actual harm !'  
And coming straight to Sarum Close,  
As one who dreams his wife is dead,  
And cannot in his slumber weep,  
And moans upon his wretched bed,  
And wakes, and finds her there asleep,  
And laughs and sighs, so I, not less  
Relieved, beheld, with blissful start,  
The light and happy loveliness  
Which lay so heavy on my heart."

## V.

### *NOCTAMBULISM.*

BY some accounts, Theseus met with his death through missing his step on the highest cliffs in Scyros, and thence tumbling down headlong—the consequence of taking a walk after dark, as his practice was. Serve him right, will be the verdict of those to whom every species of noctambulism, civic or rural, appears a thing unnatural and baneful, and who would apply to every night-walker, on system, Seneca's reproach of baseness, *Turpis est*—on the score of perverting the proper uses of day and night—*qui officia lucis noctisque pervertit*. We have holy writ for it, that if a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world ; but if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.

Nevertheless the taste, not to call it instinct, for noctambulism is in some people so strong as to be practically irresistible. It may be a morbid preference, after the manner exemplified in Elsie Venner—that curious physiological study of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes's—who at that period of the year when, on account of rattlesnakes, the Rockland people were most cautious of wandering in the leafier coverts which

skirted the base of the mountain, and the farmers never ventured among the bushes except in thick long boots—preferred this particular period for her copse-wood rambles ; for she “was never so much given to roaming over the mountain as at this season ; and as she had grown more absolute and uncontrollable, she was as like to take the night as the day for her rambles.” Or it may be an ill-conditioned habit, after the sort ascribed by Samuel Butler to the Duke of Buckingham, whose secretary some affirm him to have been, and whom he makes out to have been *turpis*, *turpissimus*, for Seneca’s own reason, and in Seneca’s own sense. For the author of *Hudibras* taxes “a Duke of Bucks” with damming up all those lights that nature made in the noblest prospects of the world, and opening other little blind loopholes backwards, by turning day into night, and night into day ; with rising, eating, and going to bed by the Julian account, long after all others that go by the new style ; and with keeping the same hours with owls and the antipodes. “ He does not dwell in his house, but haunt it, like an evil spirit that walks all night to disturb the family, and never appears by day. He lives perpetually be-nighted . . . He is as inconstant as the moon, which he lives under . . . With St. Paul, though in a different sense, he dies daily, and only lives in the night.” Although noctambulism may be something decidedly abnormal, those who defend or practise it, or both, need not be such morbid excrescences from nature as a

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semi-snakish damsel, whose blood is tainted with a fatal venom, or as a profligate peer damned by more poets than one to everlasting fame. The lover, in Thomson, is harmless enough, though perhaps a thought "spoony," in his night-wandering habits ; for it is this ideal, and rather highly idealised, young gentleman's practice not to quit his retirement

"till the Moon.

Peeps through the chambers of the fleecy East,  
Enlightened by degrees, and in her train  
Leads on the gentle Hours ; then forth he walks,  
Beneath the trembling languish of her beam,  
With softened soul, and woos the bird of eve  
To mingle woes with his ; or, while the world  
And all the sons of care lie hushed in sleep,  
Associates with the midnight shadows drear."

George Fox used to perplex the rustics, not more by his taste for sitting in a hollow tree all day, than by that for walking the fields by night, like a man possessed. The Man of the Hill, as he is called in Fielding's chief work, frightens the country people by his habit of walking by night. Mackenzie's Man of Feeling, whom "the country people called the Ghost, was known by the slouch in his gait, and the length of his stride . . . Yet, for all he used to walk o' nights," quoth the curate, "he was as gentle as a lamb at times, for I have seen him playing at tee-totum with the children, on the great stone at the door of our church-yard." Byron is the original of that young hero of Mr. Disraeli's who avows to Venetia his preference for

night exercise : "Everything is so still, and then you hear the owls. I cannot make out why it is, but nothing gives me more pleasure than to get up when everybody is asleep. It seems as if one were the only living person in the world." It is the practice of *le père Aubry*, in Chateaubriand's Indian romance, to rise from his couch at midnight, and wander on the mountains, in meditation and prayer. Even during the winter he keeps up this habit—loving to see the forest-trees wave their now leafless branches, and to watch the clouds fleeting athwart the sky, and to listen to the winds and the waterfalls amid that else unbroken silence. The poet of the *Biglow Papers*, dating from the same Transatlantic shores, has put on record in characteristic style *his* estimate of the advantages and attractions of noctambulism :

" I love to start out arter night's begun,  
An' all the chores about the farm are done,  
The critters milked an' foddered, gates shet fast,  
Tools cleaned against to-morrer, supper past,  
An' Nancy darin' by her ker'sene lamp,—  
I love, I say, to start upon a tramp,  
To shake the kinkles out o' back and legs."

After explaining his preference for certain spots, such as Concord-road and Concord-bridge, Esquire Biglow goes on to report that—

" They're 'most too fur away, take too much time  
To visit often, ef it ain't in rhyme ;  
But there's a walk that's hendier a sight,

And suits me fust rate of a winter's night,—  
I mean the round whale's-back o' Prospect-hill.  
I love to loiter there while night grows still,  
An' in the twinklin' villages about,  
Fust here, then there, the well-saved light goes out,  
And nary sound but watch-dogs' false alarms,  
Or muffled cock-crows from the drowsy farms,  
Where some wise rooster (men act jest thet way)  
Stands to't thet moon-rise is the break o' day.

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I love to muse there till it kind o' seems  
Ez ef the world went eddyin' off in dreams.  
The north-west wind that twitches at my baird  
Blows out o' sturdier days not easy scared,  
An' the same moon thet this December shines  
Starts out the booths an' tents o' Putnam's lines ;  
. . . And 'twixt the silences, now fur, now nigh,  
Rings the sharp challenge, hums the low reply."

Sir Percival Tracey, in the *Cartoniana*, insists upon it that we do not sufficiently cultivate the friendship of Night, but separate her by too sharp a line from the Day. So it is his wont, as a practical philosopher, to ride out often in summer, and even in winter often to ramble forth, when his guests have been for hours in their beds. He thus takes into his day impartially all the twenty-four hours (in effect ignoring the Scripture query, *Are there not twelve hours in the day?*—a query that immediately precedes the assurance of that man's stumbling who walks after dark). "There are trains of thought set in motion by the sight of the stars, which are dormant in the glare of the sun. And without such thoughts, man's thinking is incomplete."

Mr. Pisistratus Caxton concedes the charm of night, and owns to having often felt the truth Sir Percival has thus expressed ; more especially, perhaps, to have felt it when travelling alone in his younger days, and in softer climates than ours. But there comes a time—and “Sisty,” *habemus confitentem*, is at the time of this utterance verging on sixty—when one is compelled to admit that there is such a thing as rheumatism, and that even bronchitis is not altogether a myth. “All mortals, my dear Tracey, are not blessed with your enviable health, and there is a proverb which warns us against turning night into day.” Sir Percival, in reply, suspects that the proverb applies the most to those who shut out the night ; and argues that the unhealthful time to be out is just before and just after sunset—precisely the time which the fashionable part of our population seem to prefer for exercise. Personally he has never found out-door noctambulism injurious, elderly though he be. “My gamekeeper,” too, “tells me he is never so well as that part of the year when he is out half the night at watch over his preserves.” As this whim of Sir Percival’s about night exercise is captivating and plausible, Mr. Caxton deems it due to the health of his readers, to warn them, in a foot-note, against acting upon it without the sanction of their medical advisers. In a later page of the essay on Motive Power, when the two interlocutors have parted for the night, our author, regaining his own room, opens his window, and looks forth on the

moonlit garden. A few minutes later, "a shadow, moving slow," he writes, "passed over the silvered ground, and, descending the terrace stairs, vanished among the breathless shrubs and slumbering flowers. I recognised the man who loved to make night his companion."

With regard to the sanitary aspect of the question, the Original Mr. Walker sided with the French, "who observe rules respecting health more strictly than we do," in professing a decided mistrust of sunset, on account of the vapour which usually rises about that time, and which they call *le serein*; and he adds, from his own experience, "Though I think the fresh morning air is the most invigorating in its effects, there is no period when I have felt actually so much alacrity and energy as when taking exercise, either on foot or horseback, at the dead of night, provided the night is clear and dry, and most especially during a fine frost." The body and mind seemed to him to be more in unison under such circumstances—to be more harmoniously *en rapport*, to pull better together than at any other time.

When the young pastor, in the *Chronicles of Carringford*, meets his strange acquaintance, Mrs. Hilyard, in the country street at night—the two approaching each other just as if they had arranged a meeting at eleven o'clock of that wet January night, in the gleaming, deserted thoroughfare,—his remark that the meeting seems scarcely to be accidental, is met by

the assurance that he is talking romance and nonsense, quite inconceivable in a man just come from the society of deacons: "We have met, my dear Mr. Vincent, because, after refreshing my mind with your lecture, I thought of refreshing my body by a walk this fresh night. One saves candles, you know, when one does one's exercise at night; whereas walking by day wastes everything—time, tissue, daylight, invaluable treasures; the only light that hurts nobody's eyes, and costs nobody money, is the light of day."

For many years of his life, night-walking was a frequent practice of Professor Wilson's, whether among the English lakes or deep in the Highland glens. On his way for a midnight ramble in solitude—for his daughter and biographer tells us that in spite of his generally even flow of good spirits, and his lively enjoyment of social pleasures, it seemed as if in his inmost heart he craved some influence more soothing and elevating than even the most congenial companionship could afford—he would often call on a friend, and with him converse for a while, "before taking his solitary way to the mountains, within the deep shadows of which he would wander for hours, engaged in what he appropriately calls MIDNIGHT ADORATION.

"Beneath the full-orbed moon, that bathed in light  
The mellowed verdure of Helvellyn's steep,  
My spirit teeming with creations bright,  
I walked like one who wanders in his sleep."

When, in 1815, he brought his winsome wife to Kin-

naird for a Highland tour together afoot, we find from a letter of the lady at whose house they stopped, that he took to noctambulism at once. "They arrived here late last night," she writes. "The following day and greater part of the night he passed rambling among our glens alone."

It is amusing to hear of him, on one of his mid-winter sallies from Elleray, through deep snow, arriving at Mr. de Quincey's cottage at Grasmere at half-past one in the morning. The Opium-eater was not in bed, nor was he at home. He was at the Nab ; and when he returned about three o'clock, he found his stalwart visitor in possession of *his* bed, and fast asleep. It had been a marvel worth record, if the owner of that bed had been found asleep in it at that hour. Hospitality apart—and he was the most hospitable of men—Thomas de Quincey was not the man to dispute possession of a bed at that time of night.

Swift would seem to have been addicted to night-walking, but rather in town than country. In his later correspondence we meet once and again with expressions of regret at his no longer being able to indulge that preference. "I must do the best I can," he writes to Dr. Sheridan in 1733, "but shall never more be a night-walker." And two years later we find him telling another correspondent, after detailing points of ill-health, and how he deals with them, "I ride a dozen miles as often as I can, and always walk

the streets, except in the night, which my head will not suffer me to do" now.

The *noctambule*, we are cautioned, must be carefully distinguished from the *noctivague*—the latter being a person who, in London slang, is said to have "the key of the street ;" in other words, one who does not go home because he has no home to go to, and no money to hire one with. Accordingly we learn that the noctivague's highest idea of human happiness is to have a room where he can turn-in at nine, and sleep till the next morning ; and if he succeed in getting possession of one, he is said to become in general remarkably regular in his habits and hours. Whereas the noctambule is characterised by a reluctance to go to bed at the time which mankind in the bulk consider proper for that purpose. To him, going to bed at night is a mere conventionality ; he sees no necessary connection between night and sleep—sleep being simply intended to repair the wear and tear caused by bodily and mental activity, while night happens to be his period of activity. "L'atmosphère extérieure de la nuit paraît plus en harmonie avec ses goûts, son intelligence, ses sens même." So writes a French essayist, who has made *le noctambule* his special study in Paris by gaslight. And, as one of M. Lemere's iewers has observed, some noctambulists 1 this principle so far, that during the hs they never see daylight unless when vertakes them on their way home. Re-

spectability, he goes on to say, may denounce this taste, but cannot condemn it as utterly irrational ; it being undeniable that noctambulism has charms and enjoyments of a high order. Who, for instance, but the noctambulist has ever thoroughly and honestly enjoyed a sunrise ? "Sunrise finds him [unlike the ill-conditioned early riser, who has to get up on purpose] in the full possession of all his faculties—no remnant of a hastily-snatched sleep lies heavy on his eyelids, like an ill-digested morsel. It steals upon him gently, courting but not demanding his admiration, and he sinks to rest with a mind filled with impressions of beauty which crystallise into golden dreams." Furthermore this apologist for noctambulism maintains that none but the night-walker is competent to give an opinion of any value on the architecture of a great city ; that no one, for example, can be said to have seen St. Paul's until he has seen it through the smokeless air of the early summer morning, when all its lines come out clear and sharp, and the cross above glitters in the first rays of the rising sun.

"On the Rialto every night at twelve  
I take my evening's walk of meditation,"

says Pierre, in *Venice Preserved*. And though the habit may seem in keeping with Pierre's character as a conspirator, it will not tell against him with the candid and the contemplative.

The Right Hon. W. Windham records in his diary his walking "a good while, the moon shining bright,

in Berkeley Square, enjoying a feel of more happiness than usual." It was while his and Crabbe's in every sense great friend, Burke, was taking that starving poet's appeal into consideration, that the latter, in his uncontrollable agitation, as he afterwards told Sir Walter Scott, "walked Westminster Bridge backwards and forwards till daylight." When Crabbe was a much older and a much happier man, he took a night ramble as well as any; and during his visit to Edinburgh, in 1822, he was more than once detected rambling after night-fall by himself, among some of the obscurest wynds and closes of Auld Reekie; until Sir Walter, afraid of his getting into trouble, took the precaution of setting a discreet *caddie* to follow him the next time he sallied out alone after dark. Lord Lytton calls it one of the greatest pleasures in the world to walk alone and at night through the long lamp-lit streets of London, where, even more than in the silence of woods and fields, he seems to find a source of endless, various meditations: *Crescit enim cum amplitudine rerum vis ingenii.* This is of course while the streets are yet thronged. Their interest is more tragically indicated by the author of *Basil*—the story, not the play—when he describes "the glittering high-ways of London, amid all the appealing beauty and all the revolting horror of the hours of darkness"—those solemn hours, when, as he goes on to say, virtue and vice approach each other closest in that sublime procession of human life; those appalling

hours, when the teeming city shows most terribly its evil growth of loathsome crime and spectral poverty, of destitution in its fierce dumbness, of idleness in its whining effrontery, of depravity in its reckless rage of drunken joy; those tearful hours, "when even the sunshine spirits of Charity and Love, tremble as they toil mercifully onward to succour and to save."

In one of Lord Jeffrey's gushing letters to Mr. Dickens, a paragraph begins with this note of admiration: "How funny that *besoin* of yours for midnight rambling in city streets, and how curious that Macaulay should have the same taste or fancy! If I thought there was any such inspiration as yours to be caught by the practice, I should expose my poor irritable trachea, I think, to a nocturnal pilgrimage without scruple. But I fear I should have my venture for my pains." This was written in 1847; and presumably it is in reference to that period that Mr. Dickens describes, in the *Uncommercial Traveller*, his having suffered "some years ago" from a temporary inability to sleep, which caused him to walk about the streets all night for a series of several nights. This disorder, the result of "a distressing impression," might, he says, have taken a long time to conquer, if it had been faintly experimented on in bed; but it was soon defeated by the brisk treatment of getting up directly after lying down, and going out and coming home tired at sunrise. And in the course of these nights he professes to have finished his educa-

tion in a fair amateur experience of houselessness. His principal object being to get through the night, the pursuit of it, as he says, brought him into sympathetic relations with people who have no other object every night in the year. In a letter to his American correspondent Mr. Felton, written in January, 1844, he describes himself as weeping and laughing by turns over the composition of his *Christmas Carol*, and as altogether exciting himself about it in no ordinary manner—for, thinking about it and about it he at that time walked the “black streets of London” fifteen and twenty miles at a stretch, many a night, when all the sober folk had gone to bed. Besides the chapter expressly devoted to the subject of Night-walks, his various stories abound in incidental glimpses of the great city on its night-side, or after dark. Mr. de Quincey delighted in night-ramblings through the streets of London *before* they began to empty of their wayfarers; and some of these ramblings led the Opium-eater to great distances,—“for an opium-eater is too happy to observe the motion of time,”—and occasionally in his attempts to steer homewards, as he phrases it, upon nautical principles, by fixing his eye on the pole-star, and seeking ambitiously for a north-west passage, instead of circumnavigating all the capes and headlands he had doubled in his outward voyage, he “came suddenly upon such knotty problems of alleys, alleys without soundings, such enigmatical entries, and such sphinx’s

riddles of streets without obvious outlets or thoroughfares, as must baffle the audacity of porters, and confound the intellects of hackney-coachmen." But the pleasure this "nicht-wanderin' man," as the Ettrick Shepherd calls him, took in the London streets by night was apparently identical with that so heartily and almost passionately avowed by Charles Lamb.

The author of *Paris au gaz*, already referred to, invites us to follow him in tracking the erratic life of a company of noctambulists—men who turn day into night and *vice versa*, sleeping till half-past hour in the afternoon, and then starting for peregrinations which they prolong through the night—not, he assures us, with any design of malice prepense, of murdering or housebreaking, but merely for the pleasure of walking about in the company of cats, police-patrols, and *chiffonniers*. The eccentric Dr. Gourdy is especially commemorated in this capacity by M. Julien Lemer; but perhaps the most noteworthy of these *noctambules* is the poet Gérard de Nerval, hailed by British critics as the author of so many delightful tales, and a distinguished contributor to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, who "at last was found, after a night of noctambulism, hanging at dawn from a lamp-post at a street-corner." Edgar Allan Poe professes, as a tale-teller extraordinary, to have taken to noctambulism in Paris, with one Auguste Dupin, whose freak of fancy it was to be

enamoured of the night for her own sake, a *bizarrie* into which his companion quietly fell, giving himself up, indeed, to all the wild whims of *ce cher Auguste* with a perfect *abandon*. "The sable divinity would not herself dwell with us always ; but we could counterfeit her presence." And this they effected by a process reminding us of Butler's charge against the Duke of Bucks, of damming up the lights of nature and opening other little blind loopholes, turning day into night and night into day. For at the first dawn of morning they closed all the massive shutters of the old building they occupied, and lighted a couple of tapers, which threw out only the ghastliest and feeblest of rays. "By the aid of these we then busied our souls in dreams—reading, writing, or conversing, until warned by the clock of the advent of true darkness." Then they sallied forth into the streets, arm-in-arm, continuing the topics of the day, or roaming far and wide, generally until a very early hour ; seeking amid the wild lights and shadows of the populous city that infinity of mental excitement which quiet observation can afford. Morbid as the practice may have been, at any rate it is not morbid in the same degree or kind even as Sydney Carton's night-wanderings round and about the house of Dr. Manette. "Many a night he vaguely and unhappily wandered there when wine had brought no transitory gladness to him ; many a dreary daybreak revealed his solitary figure lingering there, and still lingering

there when the first beams of the sun brought into strong relief, removed beauties of architecture in spires of churches and lofty buildings, as perhaps the quiet time brought some sense of better things, else forgotten and unattainable, into his mind. Of late, the neglected bed in the Temple-court had known him more scantily than ever ; and often when he had thrown himself upon it no longer than a few minutes, he had got up again and haunted that neighbourhood." Kate Coventry declares that she *does* like perambulating London streets by gas-light ; of course with a gentleman to take care of her (honest John being *the* gentleman)—it is so much pleasanter than being stewed up in a brougham ; and if it is delightful even in winter, how much more so in the hot summer nights of the season ! "Your spirits rise and your nerves brace themselves as you inhale the midnight air, with all its smoky particles pure by comparison with that which has just been poisoning you in a crowded drawing-room." When the Country Parson of the Recreations became a City one, and still continued them, it was his avowed practice to think out some of his essays "in solitary half-hour walks, on quiet winter evenings, in a certain broad gas-lit street remarkable for that absence of passers-by which is characteristic of many of the streets of this beautiful city" (Edinburgh). Different indeed is the spirit of such noctambulism from that intimated by Shakspeare's Faulconbridge, when he says,

“Who dares not stir by day must walk by night.”

And those who so walk by night, in their own despite,  
may be too generally referred to the disreputable  
category summarized by Mr. Barham in one of his  
*Ingoldsby Legends* :

“In the dead of the night, though with labour oppress,  
Some mortals disdain the ‘calm blessings of rest;’  
Your cracksman, for instance, thinks night-time the best  
To break open a door, or the lid of a chest ;  
And the gipsy who close round your premises prowls  
To ransack your hen-roost and steal all your fowls,  
Always sneaks out at night with the bats and the owls,  
So do witches and warlocks, ghosts, goblins, and ghouls ;  
To say nothing at all of those troublesome ‘swells,’  
Who come from the playhouses, ‘flash kens,’ and ‘hells,’  
To pull off people’s knockers, and ring people’s bells.”

## VI.

### *GLIMPSES WITHIN BY GAZERS WITHOUT.*

IT is natural that a night-wandering man, especially if a recluse, should find matter for meditation, not fancy-free, in the passing glimpses he sometimes gets, through closed blinds in lighted rooms, of cheerful household interiors and social gatherings, from which, if a recluse, he is, whatever the cause of his secluded life, practically and effectively cut off. It may be the blinds are not down, and then the grouped figures he can descry have a more definite interest. But even if visible in shadowy outline only, they fix his gaze for the moment. And all the more vividly that interior seems lighted up with a happy fireside glow, that the lonesome gazer is, feelingly, and in more senses than one, as he gazes, out in the cold.

As naturally, he is not indifferent to the literature of the subject. He takes Wordsworth's interest in the taper-lighted room even, apart from other evidences of life and humanity within it. Wordsworth's *perhaps* is enough for him, as a suggestive speculation, and a solacing one. That poet makes memorable his glimpse of a taper seen from afar amid a black recess of mountains, silent, dreary, motionless,—whose light the lake below reflects not, nor does the

clouded sky afford company to mitigate and cheer its loneliness :

“ Yet, round the body of that joyless Thing  
 Which sends so far its melancholy light,  
 Perhaps are seated in domestic ring  
 A gay society with faces bright,  
 Conversing, reading, laughing ;—or they sing,  
 While hearts and voices in the song unite.”

The sixth book of the *Excursion* closes with a parallel passage, more distinct in character. The pastor of the Churchyard among the Mountains there commemorates the virtues of a widower devoted to his family of daughters, whose peaceful home, trim garden, and happy surroundings are described with interest ; and thus the narrative proceeds :

“——But when the gloom  
 Of night is falling round my steps, then most  
 This dwelling charms me ; often I stop short  
 (Who could refrain ?), and feed by stealth my sight  
 With prospect of the company within,  
 Laid open through the blazing window :—there  
 I see the eldest daughter at her wheel  
 Spinning amain, as if to overtake  
 The never-halting time ; or, in her turn,  
 Teaching some novice of the sisterhood  
 That skill in this or other household work,  
 Which, from her father’s honoured hand, herself,  
 While she was yet a little one, had learned.  
 Mild man ! he is not gay, but they are gay ;  
 And the whole house seems filled with gaiety.”

Nathaniel Hawthorne’s was a practised hand at such studies. The wayfarer in *Mosses from an old*

*Manse*, himself out in the snow, a solitary and desolate, hails as a beacon-light of humanity the gleaming windows of the room in which parson and *placens uxor* are sedately seated, while the children tumble themselves upon the hearth-rug, and grave puss sits fronting the fire, and gazing, with a semblance of human meditation, into its fervid depths. In his *Night Sketches* he goes to and fro, deriving a sympathetic joy or sorrow from the varied glimpses within he gets from without. "Through yonder casement I discern a family circle,—the grandmother, the parents, and the children,—all flickering, shadow-like, in the glow of a wood fire. Bluster, fierce blast, and beat, thou wintry rain, against the windowpanes! Ye cannot damp the enjoyment of that fireside." And in the *Blithedale Romance* he gives us Miles Coverdale stealing softly to a lighted window of the old farm-house, peeping darkling in, to see all the well-known faces round the supper-board, and proposing to noiselessly unclose the door, glide in, and take his place on a vacant seat among them, without a word; while in two earlier chapters he is the observant watcher of the drama of action in which Westervelt, and Zenobia, and Priscilla are the actors, as seen through the drawing-room windows of the boarding-house in town. Frederika Bremer, in one of her shorter stories, *The Curate*, is similarly bent on sight-seeing from opposite windows, given the convenience of a gaily illumined chamber, with no envious blinds.

Joanna Baillie's copy of verses descriptive of night-travelling in November, comprises this among other transient glimpses :

“ Through village, lane, or hamlet going,  
The light from cottage window, showing  
Its inmates at their evening fare,  
By rousing fire, where earthenware  
With pewter trenchers, on the shelf,  
Give some display of worldly pelf,  
Is transient vision to the eye  
Of him our hasty passer-by ;  
Yet much of pleasing import tells,  
And cherished in his fancy dwells,  
Where simple innocence and mirth  
Encircle still the cottage hearth.”

Mr. Mayhew's informant on the subject of “gallows” literature, or “execution broadsheets,” which sell so well in obscure hamlets, told him that one evening he saw through an uncurtained cottage window, soon after Rush was hanged, eleven persons, of all ages, gathered round a scanty fire, which was made to blaze by being fed with a few sticks,—to which eager audience an old man was reading, by the firelight, a broadsheet of Rush's end, sold to him that day by the outsider gazer. The scene must have been impressive, so evidently had it left

mark on the not over susceptible mind of this student of Newgate lore.

even in Norfolk, this is getting too nearly into the Bailey latitudes. Let us shift the scene

into politer circles, and dip into *lettres* a little *plus belles*. Readers of Madame de Staël's *Corinne* may remember the scene where she arrives at the mansion, or rather in the garden grounds, of Lady Edgarmond, by night, and hears that Lord Nevil, her own Oswald, has just opened the ball with the heiress, Lucy ; how the outside stranger, sore at heart, thinks of *Hamlet*, in which a spectre wanders round the festal palace ; how, as she approaches the house, such a tremor seizes her that she is forced to sit down on a stone bench which faces the lighted windows—a throng of rustics, assembled to look in upon the dancers, preventing her being seen ; how she gazes the while on Oswald, who comes to a balcony, to breathe the fresh evening air,—and then on Lucy, with a result which forces away Corinne into a more shadowy retreat.

Again. There is a scene to the purpose in *Romola*, —that of the supper in the Rucellai gardens ; when, in the chill obscurity that surrounded this centre of warmth, and light, and savoury odours, may be seen Baldassare, the lonely disowned man, walking in gradually narrowing circuits. “He paused among the trees, and looked in at the windows, which made brilliant pictures against the gloom. He could hear the laughter ; he could see Tito gesticulating with careless grace. . . . Baldassare’s mind was highly strung. . . . He had a savage satisfaction in the sight of Tito’s easy gaiety, which seemed to be

preparing the unconscious victim for more effective torture.

"But the men seated among the branching tapers and the flashing cups could know nothing of the pale fierce face that watched them from without. The light can be a curtain as well as the darkness."

Or take note of Victor Hugo's Valjean, the spurned and homeless convict, to whom none will give shelter, peeping in wistfully and stealthily at the cottager's lighted window—through which he gazed on a table laid for supper, a copper lamp on the coarse white cloth, the tin mug glittering like silver and full of wine, and the smoking soup-tureen; while, seated at the table he saw the hearty open-faced father of the family riding a child on his knee, the young mother suckling another child,—all of them radiant with happiness. "The stranger stood for a moment pensively before this gentle and tranquillizing spectacle, . . . and probably thought that this joyous house might prove hospitable, and that where he saw so much happiness he might find a little pity."\* How mistaken he was in this inference, the reader of one of the most rememberable episodes in M. Hugo's prose epic, will remember right well.

Mr. Dickens's Eugene Wrayburn systematically gazes as a stealthy outsider on the lonely girl with the dark hair, "a sad and solitary spectacle," through

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\* *Les Miserables*, ch. xv.

the little window of but four pieces of glass, uncurtained, which shows him the room, and the bills upon the wall about drowned people,—and he feels, as he hies him back to his hiding-place, that all is becoming very grim indeed. It is in the same story we have poor old houseless Betty Higden, wandering away by night, anywhere, anywhere, so that she may but avoid the workhouse, lingering before the humble houses in the little street, the inner firelight shining on the panes as the twilight darkened. And when the families gathered indoors there, for the night, she knew it was a foolish fancy to feel, though she could not help feeling, as if it were a little hard in them to close the shutter and blacken the flame. “So with the lighted shops, and speculations whether their masters and mistresses taking tea in a perspective of back-parlour—not so far within but that the flavour of tea and toast came out, mingled with the glow of light, into the street—ate or drank or wore what they sold, with the greater relish because they dealt in it.” One of the most telling incidents in *Jane Eyre*, is her arrival by night, after losing herself on the moor, at the sequestered house of the St. Johns. A friendly gleam from the lozenged panes of a very small latticed window, within a foot of the ground, encouraged the weary wanderer to glance within: the aperture was so screened and narrow, that curtain or shutter had been deemed unnecessary; and when she stooped down and put

aside the spray of foliage shooting over it, she could see all within : a room with a sanded floor, clean scoured ; a dresser of walnut, with pewter plates ranged in rows, reflecting the redness and radiance of a glowing peat fire. She could see a clock, a white deal table, some chairs. The candle, whose ray had been a beacon, burnt on the table ; and by its light an elderly woman, somewhat rough-looking, but scrupulously clean, like all about her, was knitting a stocking. Jane noticed these objects curiously enough—in them there was nothing extraordinary ; but a group of more interest appeared near the hearth, sitting still amidst the rosy peace and warmth suffusing it. “Two young, graceful women, ladies in every point, sat, one in a low rocking-chair, the other on a lower stool ; both wore deep mourning of craped bombazeen, which sombre garb singularly set off very fair necks and faces ; a large old pointer dog rested his massive head on the knee of one girl—in the lap of the other was cushioned a black cat.” A strange place was this humble kitchen for such occupants : who could they be ? A main part of the third volume of *Jane Eyre* is devoted to the solution of that enigma, and of its bearing on the fortunes of the heroine. In another Miss Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* we creep with Heathcliff through a broken hedge, grope our way up the path to the Grange, and plant ourselves (if we can) on a flower-pot under the drawing-room window, whence a light

is shining, the shutters not yet put up, and the curtains only half closed ; and by standing on the basement, and clinging to the ledge, we see—" ah ! it was beautiful—a splendid place carpeted with crimson, and crimson-covered chairs and tables, and a pure white ceiling bordered by gold, a shower of glass-drops hanging in silver chains from the centre, and shimmering with little soft tapers. Old Mr. and Mrs. Linton were not there; Edgar and his sister had it entirely to themselves. Shouldn't they have been happy ? We should have thought ourselves in heaven!"—the we being Heathcliff and Catherine. Or, for a change, with Lord Lytton's Arabella Crane we stand in the street before the showy house of Madame Caumartin—the street-lamps by this time lighted, and the quiet street comparatively deserted,—while from the first-floor windows the lights stream over a balcony filled with gay plants, and one of the casements is partially open, and now and then the watcher can just catch a glimpse of a passing form behind the muslin draperies, or hear the sound of some louder laugh. Evening deepens into night—night grows near to dawn ; and still, in her dark-grey dress and darker mantle, Arabella Crane stands motionless, her eyes fixed on those windows. In Miss Thackeray's *Village on the Cliff*, one of the most dramatic and most impressive scenes was recognised in that with which the interval between Catherine George's engagement

and her marriage comes to a close—when, after a weary season of indecision, she goes to take counsel about her marriage with the one friend in whom she trusts, and, on looking through the window of the farmhouse in which Reine dwells, sees Butler leaning over her chair, with her hand clasped in his. Keen is the pang that shoots through Catherine's heart, as, standing without in the darkness of the night, she thus looks in upon the firelit-room in which Butler and Reine are pledging their troth. On the penultimate page of *Mary Barton*, as Mary and Jem sit in cozy comfort together after dark, they see a white face pressed against the window-pane on the outside, gazing intently into the dusky chamber; and while they watch, as if fascinated by the appearance, and unable to think or stir, a film comes over the bright, feverish, glittering eyes outside, and the form sinks to the ground without a struggle of instinctive resistance, and there, fallen into what appears simply a heap of white clothes, fainting or dead, lies the poor crushed “butterfly,” the once innocent Esther.

Galt's Sir Andrew Wylie, revisiting his Scottish home, has made up his mind to go into the turnpike house at Stoneyholm, which had been one of his favourite haunts; but before tapping at the door, he glances in at the window, and sees, assembled around the fire, a numerous family, comprehending representatives of all the seven ages of man, but not one face of an old acquaintance; so he turns aside, in gloom,

and goes on his way in the dark shadow of the hedges, pondering sadly on the mutations of this disappointing and uncertain life.

At one o'clock on a memorable night, not to call it morning, in the experiences of Mr. Charles Reade's *Lucy Fountain*, the whole house, we read, was dark, except one room, and both windows of that room blazed with light ; and it happened there was a spectator of this phenomenon : a man stood upon the lawn and eyed those lights as if they were the stars of his destiny. It was David Dodd, who had indeed accepted the command of a vessel just about to sail, but whom an irresistible impulse brought to look, before he sailed, on the abode of one who had rejected him. "She watches, too," thought David ; "but it is not for me, as I for her." At half-past one the lights began to dance before his wearied eyes ; and presently David, weakened by his late fever, dozed off and forgot all his troubles, and slept as sweetly on the grass as he had often slept on the hard deck with his head upon a gun. *Super gramine* we must leave him,—as did not Lucy. Then again we have, in an earlier work by the author of *Steven Lawrence, Yeoman*, the conscience-smitten Philip turning hastily towards the Breton manoir, as the stars come out, and he feels "the reproaching holiness of nature" all around him, and tracing the outline of his friendly host's drooping figure, as he and Marguerite read together,—à bright fire glimmering through one

of the lower windows. The story of *Black Sheep* opens with George Dallas climbing the balustrade of the terrace at the Poynings, carefully avoiding the lines of light, making his way to the window of one particular room, and peering in: an old room with panelled walls and stuccoed roof, and containing a group of persons which at once arrests the peerer's attention, *et pour cause*. "He approached the window still more closely; he ventured to place his face close to the panes for a moment, as he peered anxiously into the room." Anon, the strains of sweet clear music reached his ears, floods of light streamed out from the ball-room, a throng of dancers whirled past the window, he saw the soft fluttering dresses, and at times, as a stray couple fell away from the dance, and lingered near the window, "a fair young face would meet his gaze, and the happy light of its youth and pleasure would shine upon him. He lingered, fascinated, in spite of the cold; the misery of his situation, and the imminent risk of detection to which he was exposed." The outcast heroine of *Hedged In* is described venturing as far as the pebbled drive that led to the square house of Mrs. Zeruiah Myrtle, and thinking she found encouragement in a bar of mellow light, which fell quivering upon the lawn from a bay-window at the side of the house: the sash was raised, and a warmly-tinted curtain, stirred by the wind, floated in and out. As Nixy stood looking up, very still there, under the trimmed

trees, in her shabby shawl, a sharp gust caught in the bright damask that folded the room from her sight, and "there flashed before her a kaleidoscope of soft lights, tints, glasses, cushions, curtains, and there was wafted out to her a child's cry," from what so obviously was a sick-room. There is more than one other glimpse of an interior by this same outsider in the cold, as the story goes on: into Mrs. Purcell's "parlour" for instance, with its pale walls, pictures, guitar, books,—Christina and her mother sitting together, in the light of a very soft porcelain-shaded lamp. "As Nixy came to the window, Christina was sitting with her face slightly upturned, and Margaret [the mother], as it happened, was stroking the happy face slowly and softly—a little absently, for they were talking—with her thin ringed hand." Nixy, from the dark, looked in, and thought by contrast of the den in Thicket Street she had stolen away from, and pressed her haggard young face close to the window-glass, eager to see the young lady, and lost in her broken miserable musing. "She felt very cold, for the wind was rising. She drew her shawl together, and, turning, would have left the window, but it seemed to her, very strangely and suddenly, as if the golden web had tied her there." The turning is the turning-point in her hitherto miserable life.

The closing page of Dr. Holmes's characteristic essays, in the capacity of the Professor at the Breakfast-table, should not be overlooked in these memo-

rials ; for it relates his going round by the old boarding-house, that last evening, as soon as it was dark, and finding the "gahs" lighted, but the curtains not down ; and so he stood there and looked in along the table where the boarders, severally described in due order, sat at the evening meal. "I kissed my hand to them all, unseen as I stood in the outer darkness ; and as I turned and went my way, the table and all around it faded into the realm of twilight shadows and of midnight dreams." Mr. Coventry Patmore has a picturesque image of

" —one who stands alone  
Among the mists without,  
Watching the windows . . . .  
He turns him from the lighted hall ;  
  
His sad breast scarcely heaves ;  
He paces t'wards the gloomy wood ;  
Across it breaks and cleaves ;  
And now his footfall dies away  
Upon the wither'd leaves."

De Quincey describes his outside inspection, when revisiting London, of the house in Greek Street where he had once found a miserable shelter—and how by the lights in the upper room he observed a family party, assembled at tea, and cheerful apparently and gay,—marvellous contrast, in his eyes, to the darkness, cold, desolation, and silence of the same house nineteen years before, when its nightly occupants were one famishing scholar and a poor neglected child. Fiction abounds in such genre pictures, or

rapid sketches, as that in *Archie Lovell* of Gerald in the Rue d'Artois, looking up from under the shadow of the opposite houses, to Mr. Lovell's room on the rez-de-chaussée, the windows and shutters of which were wide open, the light of a lamp showing the family group with perfect distinctness to any passer-by,—Mrs. Lovell, prim and upright, at one end of the table, her husband's stooping form and pre-occupied face at the other, and close beside him, Archie, radiant in her white dress and with her shining hair ; Jeanneton, the great good-humoured French peasant-woman, walking familiarly about in attendance upon them, in her composite capacity of cook, housemaid, and butler, *tria juncta in unda*. The hero of *Fenton's Quest* may be seen on a November evening threading the village street of Lidford, where the lighted windows have, for him, lonely and sad-hearted, a pleasant homely look ; the curtains not yet drawn before the windows of some of the snug villas, and the rooms ruddy in the firelight. In one of these he catches a brief glimpse of a young matron seated by the fire, with her children clustered at her knee, and the transient picture strikes him with a sudden pang. “He had dreamed so fondly of a home like this ; pleasant rooms shining in the sacred light of the hearth, his wife and children waiting to bid him welcome when the day's work was done.” But these things he was only to see as it were through a glass darkly ; he, an outsider ; out in the cold.

Of all such illustrative instances, however, none perhaps is so memorable as the return of the young wanderer Ronald, to Inch Orran, in Miss Ferrier's *Destiny*, to find himself already forgotten, or rather remembered only as a riddance, so that he resolves in the bitterness of his heart to leave his return unknown, and, undiscovered himself, to secure one glimpse of home from without, and then depart, and make no sign. It was evening when he reached Inch Orran. With throbbing heart Ronald leant against a part of the ancient towers, where once had been a window, but which was now merely an opening curtained with ivy. "His heart beat as though it would have burst from his bosom." At one moment he had yielded to the passionate impulse to make himself known, but, habituated to self-control, he resolved to wait, while "every fibre quivered to agony, and he gnawed his lips as if to enforce silence." Opposite to where he stood was the family sitting-room, and from the spot he could plainly discern all that was passing within—as plainly at least as the mists that gathered to his eyes would allow. There sat his father reading, his figure thinner, his hair greyer than of old ; the young people were dispersed about the room, chatting and laughing together at the tea-table, or *tête-à-tête* in a corner, or idling at the piano. Over all these Ronald's eyes wandered in search of his mother, till they riveted themselves on that cherished image : she sat

apart at a window which looked out upon the lake and the setting sun—her air betokening “the careless stillness of a thinking mind.” Anon the young party of tea-drinkers broke up; the tea-table was pushed aside, and all were in motion for a dance, as Lucy struck up a lively air. “Yes, they are happy, and I am forgotten!” exclaimed Ronald, in a burst of passionate emotion, as he rushed from his hiding-place, and fled far from Inch Orran, and far from all he loved. With which perverse flitting the first volume of the original edition of *Destiny* came to an effective close.

Mrs. Gaskell's Philip Hepburn returns from the wars, a scarred and invalid pensioner on sixpence a day, in that terrible year of famine, 1800; and hovers around, but dare not enter, the house that is his own, because the wife that occupies it, and that he loves so dearly, became his wife by a deception on his part, as regards the existence of the man she preferred to him: and when the foiled rival came home again, and a miserable exposure ensued, Philip had fled the country, to welcome the perils of a soldier's life. And now that he is back again, and lacking victuals, within sight of his own home and its humble comforts, many a summer's night he walks for hours and hours round the house which once was his, which might be his now, could he but enter and assert his right to it. “But to go with authority, and in his poor, maimed guise assert that right, he had

need be other than Philip Hepburn. So he stood in the old shelter of the steep crooked lane opening on to the hill out of the market-place, and watched the soft fading of the summer's eve into night." And then Philip would go round on the shady side of streets, and cross the bridge, and take his stand where he could see with his wistful, eager eyes the shape of the windows—the window of the very room in which his wife and child slept, unheeding of him, the hungry, broken-hearted outcast. This story was published too nearly at the same time with the laureate's *Enoch Arden* not to suggest comparison with perhaps the most striking passage in that poem. Enoch yearned to see his Annie's face again, and to know that she was happy, though no longer his. So the thought haunted and harassed him, and drove him forth at evening, when the dull November day was growing duller twilight, to the hill ; and there, we read, he sat down gazing on all below, while a thousand memories rolled upon him, unspeakable for sadness.

" — By and by  
The ruddy square of comfortable light,  
Far blazing from the rear of Philip's house,  
Allured him, as the beacon-blaze allures  
The bird of passage, till he madly strikes  
Against it, and beats out his weary life."

For Philip's house, the explanation runs, fronted on the street, the latest house to landward ; but behind, with one small gate that opened on the waste,

flourished a little garden, square and walled ; and in it thrrove an ancient evergreen, a yew-tree, and all round it ran a walk of shingle, and a walk divided it : but Enoch shunned the middle walk, and stole up by the wall, behind the yew ; and thence "that which he better might have shunned, if griefs like his have worse or better, Enoch saw." Cups and silver sparkled on the burnished board ; and on the right hand of the hearth he saw Philip, the slighted suitor of old times, "stout, rosy, with his babe across his knee"—and on the left hand of the hearth he saw the mother glancing often toward her babe, but turning now and then to speak with her son, Enoch's her first husband's son, who stood beside her tall and strong, and who smiled at her sayings, as if pleased ; while over her second father stooped a girl, "a later but a loftier Annie Lee," who dangled a length of ribbon and a ring before the infant he was holding.

"Now when the dead man, come to life, beheld  
His wife, his wife no more, and saw the babe  
Hers, yet not his, upon the father's knee,  
And all the warmth, the peace, the happiness,  
And his own children tall and beautiful,  
And him, that other, reigning in his place,  
Lord of his rights and of his children's love,—  
Then he, though Miriam Lane had told him all,  
Because things seen are mightier than things heard,  
Staggered and shook, holding the branch, and feared  
To send abroad a shrill and terrible cry,  
Which in one moment, like the blast of doom,  
Would shatter all the happiness of the hearth.

“ He therefore turning softly like a thief,  
Lest the harsh shingle should grate underfoot,  
And feeling all along the garden-wall,  
Lest he should swoon and tumble and be found,  
Crept to the gate, and opened it, and closed,  
As lightly as a sick man’s chamber-door,  
Behind him, and came out upon the waste.”

## VII.

### *BIRD'S-EYE VIEWS BY NIGHT.*

**L**UCIFER has a lullaby for the city he flies over by night in the Golden Legend :

“Sleep, sleep, O city ! till the light  
Wakes you to sin and crime again :”

but there is malediction in the lullaby, and the foul fiend exults in having more martyrs within those walls than God has, and they cannot sleep ;

“They are my bondsmen and my thralls :  
Their wretched lives are full of pain,  
Wild agonies of nerve and brain !  
And every heart-beat, every breath,  
Is a convulsion worse than death.  
Sleep, sleep, O city ! though within  
The circuit of your walls there lies  
No habitation free from sin,  
And all its nameless miseries ;  
The aching heart, the aching head,  
Grief for the living and the dead,  
And foul corruption of the time,  
Disease, distress, and want and woe,  
And crimes, and passions that may grow  
Until they ripen into crime.”

*Ach, mein Lieber!* was the exclamation with which Herr Teufelsdröckh prefaced a rhapsody addressed, at midnight, to the willing ear of the companion with whom he had just left the coffee-house, in

earnest talk: those fringes of lamplight, struggling up through smoke and thousand-fold exhalation, some fathoms into the ancient reign of Night,—what, the Professor wanted to know, might Boötes think of them, “as he leads his Hunting-Dogs over the Zenith in their leash of ethereal fire?” That stifled hum of midnight, when Traffic has lain down to rest, and Vice and Misery are abroad,—“that hum, I say, like the stertorous, unquiet slumber of sick Life, is heard in Heaven. Oh, under that hideous coverlet of vapours, and putrefactions, and unimaginable gases, what a Fermenting-vat lies simmering and hid!” The joyful and the sorrowful, he goes on to say, are there; men are dying there, men are being born; men are praying,—on the other side of a brick partition, men are cursing; and around them all is the vast, void Night. He pictures for us, as Asmodeus might do, or Lucifer of the lullaby, the proud grandee still lingering after midnight in his perfumed saloons, or reposing within damask curtains; and wretchedness cowering into truckle-beds, or shivering hunger-stricken into its lair of straw; while in obscure cellars *Rouge-et-noir* languidly emits its voice of destiny to haggard hungry villains; and councillors of state sit plotting, and playing their high chess-game, whereof the pawns are men. Then he shows us a pair of lovers eloping, while the burglar, still more silently, sets-to his picklocks and crow-bars, or lurks in wait till the watchmen of Weissnicht-

wo first snore in their boxes: from gay mansions full of light and music and high-swelling hearts, we turn to the condemned cells, in which the pulse of life beats tremulous and faint, and whence blood-shot eyes look out through the darkness, which is around and within, for the light of a stern last morning. Such are some of the objects dimly descried in that bird's-eye view, as it were, of the unroofed city. Another and more comprehensive glimpse is of "upwards of five hundred thousand two-legged animals without feathers" lying in all directions, in horizontal position,\*—their heads all in nightcaps, and full of the foolishest dreams. Riot is heard crying aloud, and seen staggering and swaggering in his rank dens of shame; and then we have a glance at a mother, with streaming hair, kneeling over her pallid dying infant, whose cracked lips only her tears now moisten. All these, and more, "heaped and huddled together, with nothing but a little carpentry and masonry between them;—crammed in,

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\* In a chapter of his *History of the French Revolution*, Mr. Carlyle pauses to enforce the reflection, "It is very curious to think what a City is. Theatres, to the number of some twenty-three, were open every night during these prodigies [September, 1792]; while right-arms here grew weary with slaying, right-arms there were twiddledeeing on melodious catgut: at the very instant when Abbé Sicard was clambering up his second pair of shoulders, three men high, five hundred thousand human individuals were lying horizontal, as if nothing were amiss."—Part iii., book i., chapter vi.

- like salted fish, in their barrel ;—or weltering, shall I say, like an Egyptian pitcher of tamed vipers, each struggling to get its *head above* the others : *such* work goes on under that smoke-counterpane !—But I, *mein Werther*, sit above it all ; I am alone with the Stars.” Himself a bright particular one, in his way,—which, being particular, is quite out of the common way ; a planet, a comet even, rather than a fixed star. Cometary indeed many may well deem him, on the score of his hazy, unsubstantial, though imposing form, as well as of his eccentric and unaccountable orbit.

Could the reader take an Asmodeus’ flight, suggests Mr. Carlyle, in his account of August 10, 1792, and waving open all roofs and privacies, look down from the tower of Notre-Dame, “what a Paris were it ! Of treble-voice whimperings or vehemence, of bass-voice growlings, dubitations ; Courage screwing itself to desperate defiance ; Cowardice trembling silent within barred doors ;—and all around, Dulness calmly snoring ; for much Dulness, flung on its mattresses, always sleeps.” Between the clanging of those high-storming tocsins and that snore of Dulness, “what a gamut : of trepidation, excitation, desperation ; and above it more Doubt, Danger, Atropos and Nox !” To master the diversities of misery and crime at such a period, the one unroofed house declared sufficient by Juvenal, would scarcely, nor indeed nearly, suffice : *hæc quota pars scelerum* . . . .

*usque à Lucifero donec lux occidat . . . sufficit una aomus:* a domestic microcosm. Not so toy-like, however, in scope and character as the microcosm which afforded such welcome amusement in the Castle of Indolence, whose denizens made it a favourite recreation

“In a huge crystal magic globe to spy,  
Still as you turned it, all things that do pass  
Upon this ant-hill earth ; where constantly  
Of idly busy men the restless fry  
Run bustling to and fro with foolish haste . . .  
‘Of vanity the mirror,’ this was called.”

It is of a market-town during the assizes that Lord Lytton declares that it would have been a fine sight for Asmodeus, could he have perched on one of the housetops, and looked on the murmuring and heaving sea of mortality below. “Oh, the sight of a crowd round a court of law, or a gibbet, ought to make the devil split himself with laughter.” That, or the like of that, is a theme which would have jumped well with the humour of Byron, in his Juanistic mood. Happily he has left it untouched, and as for aspirations on his part to be the Cleofas of Asmodeus, they do not get beyond a bird’s-eye view by night or Granta, his alma mater :

“ Oh ! could Le Sage’s demon’s gift  
Be realized at my desire,  
This night my trembling form he’d lift,  
To place it on St. Mary’s spire.”

Then would the unroofed halls of Cambridge

display an ample throng of "pedantic inmates," Fellows who dream of cathedral stalls or episcopal lawn, "all lulled in sleep, a goodly number"—while night-students are seen fagging in small damp rooms, and candidates for college prizes, who sacrifice hours of rest, "to scan, precisely, metres Attic;" and fast men are deep in drunkenness and dice; and so on with the rest of the graduate and undergraduate world. Hawthorne, in his "Sights from a Steeple," utters in prose the self-same *utinam* of Byron's metre. He, a watchman, all-heeding and unheeded, peering downwards at the town below, is wistful that the multitude of chimneys could speak, like those of Madrid, and betray, in smoky whispers, the secrets of all who, since their first foundation, have assembled at the hearths within. "Oh that the Limping Devil of Le Sage would perch beside me here, extend his wand over this contiguity of roofs, uncover every chamber, and make me familiar with their inhabitants!" He surmises the most desirable mode of existence to be possibly that of a spiritualized Paul Pry, hovering invisible round man and woman, witnessing their deeds, searching into their hearts, borrowing brightness from their felicity, and shade from their sorrow, and retaining no emotion peculiar to himself. But none of these things being possible, our wistful watchman, if he would know the interior of brick walls, or the mystery of human breasts, can but guess. And guess

he does, to the best of his power, and he has certainly a power of guessing. And muse he does in his best manner on the variety in situation of the people covered by the roofs beneath him, and the diversity of the events then and there befalling them. The new-born, the aged, the dying, the strong in life, and the recent dead, are in the chambers of those many mansions ; the full of hope, the happy, the miserable, and the desperate, dwell together beneath the circle of his glance.

“Then prest on me the million tragedies,  
Void of the sceptre, and the purple stole,  
Acted in quiet rooms—unseen of eyes.”

In some of the houses over which his gaze roams so coldly, guilt is entering into hearts that are still tenanted by a debased and trodden virtue,—guilt is on the very edge of commission, and the impending deed might be averted ; guilt is done, and the criminal wonders if it be irrevocable. “And yet thou hast seen little,” said the Guide of the Three Gates :

“Take off the roofs of the vast city by  
Thy inward vision : see what misery, wide  
And deep, and crowded, meets the spiritual eye !  
What dens give up their mass of agony.”

And he that was thus guided, looked and saw—scaling the upper air—large but low rooms, made hot by human breath ; here men close-packed, there poor crowded women plying the needle, with death in every stitch.

“ Piercing to drearier and more drear abodes,  
I looked into a loathly tenement,  
Where man was housed with water-newts and toads ;  
For the furr'd rafters over green pools leant ;  
Where, if the rat plunged, phosphor-lights were sent  
Through crannies, rife with fever evermore :  
Yet there each night were festering lodgers pent,  
And men and women on the filthy floor  
Lay pack'd like one great bale from Misery's rotten store.

“ Then the great city her last depths laid bare  
To me ; and her dark mysteries unlock'd  
Of pavement-trap, and slippery cellar-stair,  
And bins, with human wretchedness o'erstocked—  
A city in themselves : night vaults, that mock'd  
Despair with orgies of blotch'd wickedness,  
Hopeless the more because so foully block'd  
From air and light, those angels of redress,  
That with their sweet touch make all human evils less.”

M. Nourisson, tracing the *Progrès de la Pensée humaine*, speaks of “les saintes violences du Christianisme” as more efficacious than the heathen philosophies in this respect, that, “ transportant en quelque sorte les âmes, comme saint Cyprien fit son ami Donat, sur un lieu élevé, d'où elles découvrissent les recoins les plus secrets du monde, il leur en montra à nu tous les vices, toutes les hontes, toutes les infamies, et les pénétrant de repulsion et d'horreur, les poussa à fuir le tumulte des villes.” Jeremy Taylor has a celebrated passage in *Holy Dying*, which moots the possibility of espying from one of the battlements of heaven how many men and

women at this moment lie fainting and dying for want of bread, how many young men are hewn down by the sword of war, how many poor orphans are now weeping over the graves of those without whose life theirs had not been, and by whose life they were enabled to live on : “If we could but hear how many mariners and passengers are at this present in a storm, and shriek out because their keel dashes against a rock, or bulges under them ; how many people there are that weep with want, and are mad with oppression, or are desperate by too quick a sense of a constant infelicity : in all reason we should be glad to be out of the noise and participation of so many evils.” It were a sight and a hearing to recall Virgil’s lines, and misappropriate the application of them :

“ — summi fastigia tecti  
Ascensu supero, atque arrectis auribus asto.”

There is something Feltham liked in the mode which Solon took to comfort his friend, when he led him to the top of a turret which overlooked all the piled buildings around, and bade him think how many discontents there had been in those habitations since they were first erected, how many there then were, and how many there would be :—the top of the turret reminding one again of Virgil and his *Turrim in præcipiti stantem, summisque sub astra Eductam tectis, unde omnis Troja videri.* Plato said that, when considering the condition of mankind,

we should place our imagination up off some lofty pyramid or observatory, and thence take in a panoramic survey of the world: "Births and burials; feasting and merry-making at one house, and all in tears at another," etc. Marcus Antoninus, who in one section of his Meditations quotes this Platonic passage, in another propounds the consideration, "that if you could shoot yourself at pleasure into the sky, and thence take a view of human affairs, you would perceive a strange medley of humours and conditions," men and manners. In Gay's fable,—

" — upborne upon a cloud  
The clown survey'd the anxious crowd,"

and an instructive sight he found it, and surprising things he saw. Said Mr. Green, the aeronaut, to Theodore Hook, "You cannot think what odd things I see when I am hovering over this great city," up in a balloon; and the author of *Maxwell* hailed him accordingly as the Asmodeus of the air. Shakspere's Biron sat not quite so far aloft when he soliloquized,—

"Like a demi-god here sit I in the sky,  
And wretched fools' secrets heedfully o'er-eye."

Southey recites in a characteristic ode his visionary seizure, when borne away through the air, and in spirit beholding where a city lay beneath, like a village mapped below, when seen from a mountain top. The night had closed around, and o'er the

sullen sky were the wide wings of darkness spread ; the city's myriad lamps shone mistily below, like stars in the bosom of a lake ; and its murmurs arose incessant and deep, "like the sound of the sea where it rakes on a stony shore ;" and its vices were the burthen of a quasi-prophetic strain on the part of the rapt seer. Mr. Browning's Saul, as around him the sheep feed in silence, speculates on the bird's-eye view of the king of birds far above him :

" —— above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in sleep,  
And I lay in my hollow, and mused on the world that might lie  
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the hill and the  
sky."

Draw but a little circle, with Master Humphrey, above the clustering house-tops, and you shall have within its space, everything, with its opposite extreme and contradiction, close beside. Thus : where yonder feeble light is shining, a man is but this moment dead ; while the taper at a few yards' distance is seen by eyes that have but just now opened on the world. In the one of two houses separated by but an inch or two of wall, there are quiet minds at rest ; in the other a waking conscience that one might think would trouble the very air. "In that close corner where the roofs shrink down and cower together as if to hide their secrets from the handsome street hard by; there are such dark crimes, such miseries and horrors, as could hardly be told in whispers ;" while in the handsome street there are

folks asleep who would say such things were impossible, and out of Nature—"as if all great towns were not." Oh for a good spirit who would take the house-tops off, with a more potent and benignant hand than the lame demon in the tale, and show a Christian people what dark shapes issue from amidst their houses, to swell the retinue of the Destroying Angel as he moves forth among them! So runs an aspiration of a master of fiction's wording. In that curious etching known as Meryon's *Stryge*, the carved demon on the tower of *Notre Dame* contemplates the fair city of Paris, and grimly numbers the souls that are lost in it. With this design has been compared M. Tournier's picture of a monk "all alone" on a lofty tower, against a parapet of which he leans, and looks down on the world below—but the sentiment here is more benignant and engaging than in the other work of art and fancy. Almost the difference is as between day and night. Bird's-eye views of a great city by night are more sensational; but the sun sees strange things, and sad ones, enough and to spare, as well as do the moon and the stars.

The sixth canto of the *Lady of the Lake* opens with a description of the sun casting a sullen glance, as he awakens, through the smoky air of the dark city; and the reflection follows—

"What various scenes, and oh! what scenes of woe,  
Are witnessed by that red and struggling beam!  
The fevered patient, from his pallet low,  
Through crowded hospital beholds it stream;

The ruined maiden trembles at its gleam,  
The debtor wakes to thoughts of gyve and jail,  
The lovelorn wretch starts from tormenting dream;  
The wakeful mother, by the glimmering pale,  
Trims her sick infant's couch, and soothes his feeble wail."

Or look, with Lucretius, the Lucretius of the laureate, "Where another of our Gods, the Sun, Apollo, Delius, or (of older use) all-seeing Hyperion—what you will—has mounted yonder," nor knows he what he sees, King of the East although he seem:

"And here he glances on an eye new-born,  
And gets for greeting but a wail of pain;  
And here he stays upon a freezing orb  
That fain would gaze upon him to the last;  
And here upon a yellow eyelid fall'n  
And closed by those who mourn a friend in vain,  
Not thankful that his troubles are no more."

## VIII.

### *WIND AND RAIN BY NIGHT.*

“**S**EE, the fire is sinking low,  
Dusky red the embers glow,  
While above them still I cower ;  
While a moment more I linger,  
Though the clock, with lifted finger,  
Points beyond the midnight hour.”

Let it point. Instead of lingering a moment more, and letting the fire out, the fire must be made up, and the table drawn nearer to it for an hour or two of writing.

“And the night-wind rising, hark !  
How above there in the dark . . .  
All the noisy chimneys blow !”

- And then I think of Mr. Bickerstaffe's *Tatler* paper, written of a Christmas night, when its silence (unlike this boisterous one) and darkness disposed him to be more than ordinarily serious ; and of the sentence—more likely Addison's than Steele's : “My mind is of such a particular cast, that the falling of a shower of rain, or the whistling of wind, at such a time, is apt to fill my thoughts with something awful and solemn.” How different an entry from the “which did vex me” of Mr. Pepys' Diary. “About bed-time, it fell a-raining, and the house being all open

at top, it vexed me, but there was no help for it." Or this again, a month later,—as one other specimen of the Pepysian Night Thoughts: "About three o'clock this morning, I waked with the noise of the rayne, having never in my life heard a more violent shower: and then the catt was lockt in the chamber, and kept a great mewing, and leapt upon the bed, which made me I could not sleep a great while." After this sort was Mr. Pepys nocturnally disquieted, and his heart was put to proof

"In the dead unhappy night, and when the rain was on the roof." A glance will suffice at Horace Walpole, at a time when his nerves were shattered, and the country seemed going to the bad: "I could write volumes," he tells Lady Ossory; "but recollect that you are not alone as I am, given up to melancholy ideas, with the rain beating down on the skylight, and gusts of wind. On other nights, if I heard a noise, I should think it some desperate gamester breaking open my house: now, every flap of a door is a pistol." That was the sort of night, and that the sort of humour, in which the elegant lord of Strawberry-hill would envy the "tired ploughman," who, "dry and warm

"Hears, half asleep, the rising storm  
Hurling the hail, and sleeted rain,  
Against the casement's tinkling pane."

Half hears, and is only the cozier for the semi-sense.

In the same metre, and to the same tune, runs a descriptive passage by the Story-teller of Rimini :

“ ‘Tis a wild night out of doors ;  
 The wind is mad upon the moors,  
 And comes into the rocking town,  
 Stabbing all things up and down ;  
 And then there is a weeping rain  
 Huddling ‘gainst the window-pane,  
 The good men bless themselves in bed ;  
 The mother brings her infant’s head  
 Closer with a joy like tears,  
 And thinks of angels in her prayers ;  
 Then sleeps with his small hand in hers.”

If that is a bit of word-painting, so, with a true sense of the picturesque, is this stanza of the laureate’s :

“ Risest thou thus, dim dawn again,  
 And howlest, issuing out of night,  
 With blasts that blow the poplar white,  
 And lash with storm the streaming pane ?”

Compare with which the opening stanzas of perhaps the most piquant of all Owen Meredith’s poems : a picture of midnight past—not a sound of aught through the silent house, but the wind—at his prayers ; while the poet sat by the dying fire, and thought of the dear dead woman upstairs.

“ A night of tears ! for the gusty rain  
 Had ceased, but the eaves were dripping yet,  
 And the moon look’d forth, as though in pain,  
 With her face all white and wet.”

Southeby paints in *Thalaba* a night of darkness and of storms—that night on which his hero leads

the Old Man into the Chamber of the Tomb, to roof him from the rain :

“A night of storms ! the wind  
Swept through the moonless sky,  
And moan’d among the pillar’d sepulchres ;  
And in the pauses of its sweep  
They heard the heavy rain  
Beat on the monument above.  
In silence on Oneiza’s grave  
Her father and her husband sate.”

Mark, too, the Fair Penitent of Mr. Nicholas Rowe, in the tragedy once stock, now, shelved :

“At night she watches, all the long long hours,  
And listens to the wind and beating rain,  
With sighs as loud, and tears that fall as fast.”

And then, again, in quite another style, the opening of Bloomfield’s favourite tale of honest miller and his dame ; how one night a storm came on at bed-time, and kept them up the while it raged :

“Meekly resign’d she sate, in anxious pain ;  
He fill’d his pipe, and listen’d to the rain  
That batter’d furiously their strong abode,  
Roar’d in the dam, and lash’d the pebbled road :  
When mingling with the storm, confused and wild,  
They heard, or thought they heard, a screaming child—”

whereby hangs a tale ; the tale of the Miller’s Maid.

The night of the gracious Duncan’s murder, in the castle of Macbeth, is memorable for all time—for is not Shakspeare for all time ? Lenox *loquitur* :

“The night has been unruly ; where we lay,  
Our chimneys were blown down : and, as they say,

Lamentings heard i' the air ; strange screams of death ;  
And prophesying, with accents terrible,"

which might be, or might be something more than,  
the wailings of the wind.

To feeling, pensive hearts, as Burns words it, all  
the shows and forms of Nature have a charm,—  
whether the summer kindly warms, with life and  
light,

"Or winter howls, in gusty storms,  
The lang, dark night."

And well we know how, when the westlin wind  
blaws loud and shrill, and the night's baith mirk  
and rainy, O, he'll get his plaid, and out he'll steal,  
an' owre the hills to Nannie, O. Or how, at another  
time, and in another mood, he wanders, pressed with  
care, along the lonely banks of Ayr, when the gloomy  
night is gathering fast, loud roars the wild inconst-  
ant blast ; and as he sees the scowling tempest  
fly, chill runs his blood to hear it rave.—Words-  
worth's Wanderer, while yet in his teens, is pictured  
as one "o'erpowered by Nature ;" and in the first  
virgin passion of a soul communing with the glorious  
universe,

"Full often wished he that the winds might rage  
When they were silent : far more fondly now  
Than in his earlier season did he love  
Tempestuous nights—the conflicts and the sounds  
That live in darkness."

One of the *Noctes Ambrosianæ* opens with the

Shepherd's note of exclamation, "What'n a nicht ! Only hear to that lum\*—as if a park o' artillery were firin a salute in the sky. But a salute or salvo seldom consists o' mair than a hunder guns, and these aërial engines hae been cannonading for hours on end, as if the North and the East Wind were fechting a pitched battle wi' the South and the West for the Empire o' Darkness." In such a hurricane, adds the Gentle Shepherd, he could pity the moon—only that she has her cave of peace, star-roofed, in a region sacred from all storms.

Salathiel the Immortal relates how, with Constantius insensible and dying before him, and with his own spirit darkened by an eternal cloud, he loved loneliness and darkness, and how, when the echo of the winds came round him as he sat during his miserable midnights watching the countenance of his son, he communed with memories that he would not have exchanged for the brightest enjoyments of life. "I welcomed the sad music, in which the beloved voices revisited my soul." There is a fragment by Rogers, which starts from the same key-note—written at midnight, is the superscription, and the date 1796 :

"While through the broken pane the tempest sighs,  
And my step falters on the faithless floor,  
Shades of departed joys around me rise,  
With many a face that smiles on me no more ;

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\* Chimney.

With many a voice that thrills of transport gave,  
Now silent as the grass that tufts their grave."

The general reader will probably not need, and possibly not object, to be reminded that one of Mr. Dickens's Christmas stories opens with a description of the night wind listened to in a church ; the dismal trick it has of wandering round and round a building of that sort, and moaning as it goes ; and of trying, with its unseen hand, the windows and the doors ; and seeking out some crevices by which to enter ; and then, when once in, wailing and howling to issue forth again—soaring up to the roof, and striving to rend the rafters—then flinging itself despairingly upon the stones below, whence it passes, muttering, to the vaults. "Ugh ! Heaven preserve us sitting snugly round the fire ! It has an awful voice, that wind at Midnight, singing in a church !"

How various are the phases of feeling connected with this listening by night to the wind and rain outside ! The misery of being "hard up," a street fish-seller, speaking from experience, told Mr. Mayhew, is not when you are making a struggle to get out of your trouble ; "no, nor to raise a meal off herrings that you've given away once ; but when your wife and you are sitting by a grate without a fire, and putting the candle out to save it, a-planning how to raise money. . . . That's the pinch, sir. When the rain you hear outside puts you in mind of drownding !" A misery that is sufficiently distinguishable, *with* a difference,

almost in kind as well as degree, from the fit of the  
dismals depicted in Luttrell's sketch of the punctual  
groom shaking his master till they *both* awake,

“To listen to the wind and rain  
By fits, loud clattering on the pane,  
And envy those who stretch and yawn,  
Careless of bleak December's dawn ;—  
Or doze, perchance, some lie inventing  
To shirk this famous day for scenting,  
While gusts more strong and showers more thick  
Give him strange thoughts of shamming sick.”

Just as cozy, on the other hand, are the listeners in  
Southey's ballad (Monk Lewis metre) :

“ ’Twas in autumn, and stormy and dark was the night,  
And fast were the windows and door ;  
Two guests sat enjoying the fire that burnt bright,  
And smoking in silence with tranquil delight  
They listened to hear the wind roar.  
“ ’Tis pleasant,’ cried one, seated by the fireside,  
‘ To hear the wind whistle without.’ ”

“ What a night for the Abbey ! ” his comrade replies,  
—that Abbey by which Mary, the Maid of the Inn,  
would walk at night, free from alarm, while the wind  
whistled down the dark aisle. Any night till this  
night—which shall make of her a poor maniac, by the  
sight the Abbey has in store for her, of a dark night's  
work ; meet subject of a ditty

“ For the last gossips, when the snowy wind  
Howls in the chimney till the very taper  
Trembles with its blue flame, and the bolted gates  
Rattle before old winter's palsied hand.”

From the treatment of which by Robert the Rhymer turn we to glance at Wordsworth dropping his pen to listen to the wind that sang of trees upturn and vessels tossed—"a midnight harmony, and wholly lost to the general sense of men by chains confined of business, care, or pleasure ; or resigned to timely sleep." It was in the midnight toil of writing a political tractate on the Convention of Cintra, that Wordsworth, as the wind rose, thus dropped his pen, to listen, and resumed it to relieve a tract by a sonnet. Professor Lowell holds that for a good solid read into the small hours, there is nothing like that sense of safety against having your evening laid waste, which Euroclydon brings, as he bellows down the chimney, making your fire gasp, or rustles snowflakes against the pane with a sound more soothing than silence. "Tumultuous privacy" is Emerson's phrase for such a privilege.

Heroes and heroines of romance are all more or less addicted, in the nature of things, to a dreamy habit of listening to midnight wind and rain. Heroines in particular. And those of lady novelists more particularly. Those of Charlotte Bronté most particularly. Of hers anon. Longfellow's Alice declares herself unable to sleep whenever rain is falling. "Did it rain last night?" a friend asks ; "I did not hear it." "Yes ; about midnight, quite hard. I love to lie awake, and hear the drops fall on the roof, and on the leaves. It throws me into a delicious, dreamy state, which I like much better than sleep." There is a night in George

Eliot's masterly story of mediæval Florence, when Tito avoids going home, that he may not encounter Romola again that night ; and all through the night Romola watches, and never takes off her clothes : "She heard the rain become heavier and heavier. She liked to hear the rain : the stormy heavens seemed a safeguard against men's devices, compelling them to inaction." Currer Bell gives us Shirley and Caroline meditative and silent, after a long wet day spent together without ennui—while now a western wind roars high round the hall, driving wild clouds and stormy rain from the far-off ocean. All is tempest outside the antique lattices, all deep peace within. "Shirley sat at the window, watching the rack in heaven, the mist on earth, listening to certain notes of the gale that plained like restless spirits—notes which, had she not been so young, gay, and healthy, would have swept her trembling nerves like some omen, some anticipatory dirge." As certain notes seem to have done in the case of Currer Bell herself—at least in that of her autobiographical *altera et eadem*, Lucy Snowe—who recognises in a wail of the night wind, deepening with night, "an accent keen, piercing, almost articulate to the ear ; a plaint, piteous and disconsolate to the nerves," trilling in every gust. In vain she tries to stop her ears against that subtle, searching cry. "Three times in the course of my life, events had taught me that these strange accents in the storm—this restless, hopeless cry—denote a

coming state of the atmosphere unpropitious to life. Epidemic diseases, I believed, were often heralded by a gasping, sobbing, tormented, long-lamenting east wind. Hence, I inferred, arose the legend of the Banshee." And every mindful reader will be mindful of the impassioned finale to that fiction, pitched in the key of the paragraph on the wind drifting to the west, which the yearning expectant apostrophises in wistful suspense : " Peace, peace, Banshee—'keening' at every window ! It will rise—it will swell—it shrieks out long : wander as I 'may through the house this night, I cannot lull the blast. The advancing hours make it strong : by midnight, all sleepless watchers hear and fear a wild south-west storm." How often, is Currer Bell's reflection in another place,—how often, while women and girls sit warm in snug fire-sides, their hearts and imaginations are doomed to divorce from the comfort surrounding their persons, forced out by night to wander through dark ways, to dare stress of weather, to contend with the snow-blast, to wait at lonely gates and stiles in wildest storms, watching and listening to see the father, the son, the husband coming home. In *Shirley*, again, the record of a wet evening reminds the writer too forcibly of another evening of years ago,—a howling, rainy autumn evening like this one—when certain who had that day performed a pilgrimage to a grave new-made in a heretic cemetery, sat near a wood-fire on the hearth of a foreign dwelling. "They were merry and

social; but they each knew that a gap, never to be filled, had been made in their circle . . . that heavy falling rain was soaking into the wet earth which covered their lost darling, and that the sad, sighing gale was mourning above her buried head." In the next chapter, Caroline Helstone, sojourning in the valley of the shadow of death, has this among other musings: "Is it for nothing the wind sounds almost articulately sometimes—sings as I have lately heard it sing at night—or passes the casement sobbing, as if for sorrow to come? Does nothing, then, haunt it—nothing inspire it?" Why, to this suffering girl it suggested words one night: it poured out a strain which she could have written down, only she was appalled, and dared not rise to seek pencil and paper by the dim watchlight.

But if this cold collation of scraps and sundries is to come to a close anywhere and when, why not here and now? Often in the course of collating his coefficients has the concocter turned from his work, this bleak, bitter, blustering night, to the cheery fire that is his sole companion; and from warming his chilled fingers by its friendly blaze, again and again has he fallen into a brown study of its red depths, and collapsed into fire-gazing, not the least seductive of modes of reverie and dreamy musing. And now there occurs to him a passage in a modern poem, in which the poet says—

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“I stare i’ the crumbling fire,  
Which from my brooding eyes takes strangest shapes,  
The Past is with me, and I scarcely hear  
Outside the weeping of the homeless rain.”

The lines will appropriately serve as *terminus ad quem* of the present chapter, and as *terminus à quo* for the next,—of which FIRE-GAZING is to be the theme.

## IX.

### *FIRE-GAZING.*

#### A CHAPTER OF INSTANCES.

IN the dear old Author's Edition (1830) of the Waverley Novels, the frontispiece to the eighteenth volume is an engraving after Newton of plump and portly Abbot Boniface seated in his high-backed chair, before a fire—of two or three large logs reduced to one red glowing mass of charcoal. That figure and attitude linger on the memory. And so, in connection with them, does Sir Walter's text, from which the Royal Academician took his cue. Scott pictures the Abbot, in his Monastery of St. Mary's, gazing indolently on the fire, partly engaged in meditation on his past and present fortunes, partly occupied in endeavouring to trace towers and steeples in the red embers. "Yes," thought the Abbot to himself, "in that red perspective I could fancy to myself the peaceful towers of Dundrennan, where I passed my life ere I was called to pomp and to trouble. . . . I can almost fancy that I see the cloister garden, and the pear-trees which I grafted with my own hands." In *The Abbot*, which is a sequel to *The Monastery*, we come across the ex-abbot of the earlier tale, a fractious, querulous old man, reduced to his former vocation of gardener, but no longer delighting therein, as he had

done either when grafting those pear-trees or in placid reverie over that wood-fire.

In another of the Waverley fictions we have a glimpse of a fire-gazer. It is Francis Osbaldistone, as twilight darkens the library in Osbaldistone Hall, rejecting somewhat peevishly officious Andrew's proffer of lights, and trimming instead the wood-fire, before which he seats himself in one of the large leather chairs which flank the old Gothic chimney, while he watches unconsciously the bickering of the blaze he fosters, and meditates *telle est la vie*: human wishes fed upon the vapour of hope till they consume the substance which they inflame; "and man, and his hopes, passions, and desires, sink into a worthless heap of embers and ashes."

Scott's senior as a Scotch novelist, Henry MacKenzie, shows us the Man of Feeling sitting with one shoe buckled, delineating portraits in the fire. His man Peter in vain bustles about with a face of importance and tries to excite Harley's attention. "At last Peter bethought him that the fire needed stirring; and taking up the poker, demolished the turbaned head of a Saracen, while his master was seeking out a body for it."

As for Mr. Dickens, does he not give us little Paul Dombey studying Mrs. Pipchin, and the cat, and the fire—beside which they all three sit, and into which they silently gaze—night after night, as if a book of necromancy were before him, in three volumes? Does

he not give us Arthur Clennam in his dreary lodging, sitting before the dying fire, and turning his gaze back upon the gloomy vista of his life? "He looked at the fire from which the blaze departed, from which the after-glow subsided, in which the ashes turned grey, from which they dropped to dust, and thought, 'How soon I, too, shall pass through such changes, and be gone!' Prematurely old in feeling, Arthur Clennam is to be classed in this attitude with the old men in Longfellow's stanza :

"By the fireside there are old men seated,  
Seeing ruined cities in the ashes,  
Asking sadly  
Of the Future what it cannot give them."

In *Hard Times*, again, Louisa Gradgrind is a pronounced fire-gazer. Witness her conference with her brother, as he sits in the darker corner by the fireside, now looking at him, now at the bright sparks as they drop upon the hearth: "so much given" is she to "watching the bright ashes at twilight as they fell into the grate, and became extinct." From the fire she tries to discover what kind of woof Old Time will weave from the threads of her life. The story closes, indeed, with a sketch of Louisa watching the fire as in days of yore, but with a humbler and gentler face. Then too we have honest Joe Gargery, in *Great Expectations*, wistfully eyeing the fire he has poked in his wife's absence, while "she's Rampaged out," as he tells Pip; Pip himself gazing disconsolately in the

same direction, for all that he has seen and gone through this eventful night is reproduced to his fancy in the fantastic coals. But in his prosperous after-time Pip was fain to say that often, of an evening, when he sat alone, looking at the fire, he thought, after all there was no fire like the forge fire and the kitchen fire of his old home. Lizzie Riderhood, in *Our Mutual Friend*, is a close student, in her lonely evenings, of the dull glow of the fire, in which to her there are pictures, coming and going. She is persuaded that when looking into the hollow down by the flare, she is looking into the real world. Her petulant brother calls the fire at home her books, "for she was always full of fancies—sometimes quite wise fancies, considering—when she sat looking at it." A day dawns when she has to utter over him the bitter lament, "Oh, Charley, Charley, that this should be the end of all our pictures in the fire!" But it is not the end of her fire-gazing, by any means; as at least one colloquy with the doll's dressmaker and another with Bella Wilfer sufficiently and efficiently show.

There is an essay on Fire-Worship among Mr. Hawthorne's miscellaneous papers, in which admiration is accorded to the fire—personified for the nonce—for the acute, the profound, the comprehensive sympathy he shows with the mood of each and all, whether it be labourer, or scholar, or mortal of whatever age, sex, or degree, that draws a chair beside him, and looks into his glowing face. "He pictured

forth their very thoughts. To the youthful he showed the scenes of the adventurous life before them ; to the aged, the shadows of departed love and hope ; and if all earthly things had become distasteful, he could gladden the fireside muser with golden glimpses of a better world." Leigh Hunt amuses himself with tracing in the glowing coals the shifting forms of hills and vales and gulfs,—of fiery Alps, whose heat is uninhabitable even by spirit, or of black precipices, from which swart fairies seem about to spring away on sable wings ;—then heat and fire are forgotten, and walled towns appear, and figures of unknown animals, and far-distant countries scarcely to be reached by human journey ;—then coaches, and camels, and barking dogs as large as either, and forms that combine every shape and suggest every fancy ;—till at last the ragged coals tumbling together, reduce the vision to chaos, and the huge profile of a gaunt and grinning face seems to make a jest of all that has passed. For, as in the imagery of summer clouds, so in

" —coals in the winter fire, do idlers find  
The perfect shadows of their teeming thoughts."

It has been remarked of M. Taine, that even when he is discussing the abstruse questions of metaphysics, he irradiates them with some sparkling epigrams or some charming image—as, for example, when discussing the theory of perception, he imagines the reader in a reverie, gazing at his fire, and mentally seeing a

forest : "Vous apercevez les pans de ciel lointain au bout des allées, des têtes de biches peureuses, des volées d'oiseaux effarés ; vous entendez le bourdonnement des insectes, des bruissements de feuilles, les chuchotements du vent arrêté entre les branches. Si une bûche roule, vous sursautez étonné : sur les charbons noircis flottent encore des restes de la vision brisée." The sudden crumbling down of "those Welsh coals, long undermined like a little quarry," startle and disconcert the fire-gazer in *Never-Forgotten* ; in a later section of which history we see Lady Laura look into the coals, to see there, in the fiery crags and gullies, scraps of that weary panorama she called her life, and perhaps hoping the while that just as these miniature craters and precipices crumbled down upon one another, so might that weary life come to an end at last.

Once and again Lady Audley is pictured, with her terrible secret, gazing wistfully into the red depths of the fire. "She sat looking straight before her into the fire"—amid her endeavours to persuade her husband of his nephew's madness. Afterwards, in her own luxurious boudoir, "my lady sat listening to the moaning of the shrill March wind and the flapping of the ivy leaves against the casements, and looking into the red chasms of the burning coals." And a later paragraph reproduces the picture of "my lady, brooding by the fire in her lonely chamber, with her large, clear blue eyes fixed upon the yawning

gulfs of lurid crimson in the burning coals," and thinking of many things very far away from the terribly silent struggle in which she was engaged—her first youthful errors appearing very small to her as she looked back upon them in that long reverie by the lonely hearth.

In an earlier sensation work from the same hand we have Valerie looking not at Gaston, but at the fire, her eyes so fixed upon the blaze that she seems almost unconscious of his presence. What does she see in the red light? Her shipwrecked soul? The ruins of her hopes? The ghost of her dead happiness? "What does she see? A warning arm stretched out to save her from the commission of a dreadful deed, . . . or a stern finger pointing to the dark end, to which she hastens with a purpose in her heart so strange and fearful to her, she scarcely can believe it is her own, or that she is herself?" In a later one we have Olivia with her "eyes bent steadily upon the low heap of burning ashes in the grate;" in yet another, Sir Philip by the fire in the oak-panelled breakfast-room at the Rock, "staring at the red embers on the open hearth"—and the pseudo-Henry Dunbar, with strange memories coming back to him, "as he lay staring at the red chasms and craggy steeps in the fire." Mrs. Lobyer thinks when one feels particularly miserable there is nothing so consoling as a cozy fire: a soothing influence seems to creep over one, as one sits in the twilight, looking into red coals. Mr.

Shelton in his early days is described with his head a little bent and his bright black eyes fixed on the fire with that intensity of gaze peculiar to eyes which see something far away from the object they seem to contemplate; and in the fall of life we have him again, "looking at the fire with that steady gaze which was habitual to him—the gaze of the man who plans and calculates." Holmes Lee gives us Kitche Brandt one dark night when the rain is patterning against the window, and the wind howling and whistling fitfully through the deserted streets—sitting "in the red light of the fire, watching the faces that glowed in it." From Mrs. Clipperton's prolific pages take the old bachelier, Mr. Ceteriority, buried in the depths of his study chair, and gazing into the recesses of his study fire. Mr. Hughes makes Harry and Tom Brown at Oxford draw their chairs round to the fire and look dreamily into the embers as is the wont he says of men who are throwing out suggestions and helping me mother to think.

Cyrin Trouillefou, in Victor Hugo's romance of *Notre-Dame*, finding Gringoire over the fire, in what appears to be a brown study, demands of his friend Pierre *qui* *stücke* he is thinking of. Gringoire turns towards him with a melancholy smile and makes answer: "I am fond of the fire, my dear fellow, not for the trivial reason that it warms our feet, or cooks our soup, but because there are sparks in it. Sometimes I pass whole hours watching those sparks. I like

cover a thousand things in those stars which sprinkle the black chimney-back. Those stars are worlds too." But then Pierre Gringoire is a poet. *A priori*, one would assume that a being so addicted to reverie and the like as Chateaubriand, would always have discovered star-worlds in sparks, and every conceivable freak of fancy, in the act of fire-gazing. But his autobiography says no. He pictures himself on one occasion seated by his fireside, far on in the night, with drooping head, "and gazing at my fire, which uttered not a word to me. I had not, like the Persians, an imagination fertile enough to trace in the flame any resemblance to an anemone, or in the coals any likeness to a pomegranate." Béranger, on the other hand, has devoted a song to the prisoner's fire, written in the prison of La Force, and commencing,

"Combien le feu tient douce compagnie  
Au prisonnier, dans les longues soirées d'hiver!"

and invoking the good genius who, he says,

"—me fait voir, sur la braise animée,  
De bois, des mers, un monde, en peu d'instants."

Ships he sees in the embers,—a wreck—*trois mâts sur des flots orageux*—a flying eagle changing into a balloon—a Swiss Canton, with *glaciers, torrents, vallons, lacs, et troupeaux*. And the chanson closes with this further invocation of the prisoner to the *bon Génie*:

“Vous, qui, bravant le géolier qui nous guette,  
Me rendez jeune à près de cinquante ans,  
Sur ce brasier, vite un coup de baguette.  
O bon Génie ! amusez-moi longtemps.”

In doors, warm by the wide-mouthed fire-place, idly the farmer, in the hexameters of Evangeline, sat in his elbow-chair, and watched how the flames and the smoke-wreaths struggled together like foes in a burning city ; in contrast with which well-to-do comfort and complacency stands out, on a later page, the figure of Evangeline's dazed, dejected, houseless old father, whom vainly she strove to cheer with words and caresses, vainly offered him food : he moved not, spoke not, *looked* not—yet, with a vacant stare, ever gazed at the flickering fire-light.

On the last page of the last work of Nathaniel Hawthorne—unhappily not more than a first chapter, and that broken off unfinished—we read how, when Pansie had been kissed and put to bed, Doctor Dol-liver, her grandsire, would sit by his fireside gazing in among his massive coals, and absorbing their glow into those cavernous abysses with which all men communicate. “Hence come angels or fiends into our twilight musings, according as we may have peopled them in bygone years.” A mixture of both comes to most of us, in keeping with life's mingled experiences of good and ill, sorrow and joy. Like the account given in a living poet's verses on his musings over the firelight, that reddened and darkened down over all, as the fire itself declined :—

“Something of pleasure, and something of pain  
There lived in that sinking light. What is it?  
Faces I never shall look at again,  
In places you never will visit,

“Reveal’d themselves in each faltering ember,  
While, under a palely-wavering flame,  
Half of the years life aches to remember  
Re-appear’d, and died as they came.”

Cowper has a characteristic study of himself fire-gazing :

“Me oft has fancy, ludicrous and wild,  
Soothed with a waking dream of houses, towers,  
Trees, churches, and strange visages expressed  
In the red cinders, while with poring eye  
I gazed, myself creating what I saw.”

Nor less amused, he adds, has he sat watching the sooty films “that play upon the bars pendulous,” and forebode some stranger’s near approach. The pendulous film, not without after reference to the stranger, is honoured with special and suggestive mention in Coleridge’s poem on midnight frost :

“— the thin blue flame  
Lies on my low burnt fire, and quivers not;  
Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,  
Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.  
Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature  
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,  
Making it a companionable form,  
Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling spirit  
By its own moods interprets, everywhere  
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,  
And makes a toy of Thought.”

There is in a popular fiction the sketch given of a melodramatic author, of the transpontine class, seated beside the fire of a cheap eating-house, and seeming to gaze at vacuity, while in fact his brain had filled the fireplace with living mobs and characters, bandits, British seamen and defenceless damsels, mingling as they may. "Every volute of smoke, as it vanished up the chimney, was, to him, peopled with sylphs and demons; ships were foundering on the coals; persecuted servant-maids escaping over the hobs, and scenes of varied and surpassing effect forming in the embers." Another chapter of the story gives us a silent father and daughter, whose forms the fire throws in giant and dancing shadows on the opposite wall; while the father is looking intently on the burning log, as though seeking companionship in its fitful blaze. Another presents a little boy at school—just arrived there, and in the lowest of spirits—in a large, bare, dreary room, towards the fireplace in which the desolate little man draws his box, and sits down. "There was no poker to stir the fire into a more cheerful aspect; and so he contented himself with watching the cinders, as they formed burning caverns and precipices, suddenly tumbling into other forms, through all of which he saw the faces of his mother and sister in every direction." Miss Rhoda Broughton's Kate Chester is to be observed at a critical time gazing intently into the fire, as though she could read her future history in its little flaming chambers.

George Dallas, in *Black Sheep*, has a long, lonesome evening over a "bit of fire," his eyes fixed on the glowing embers; and the question occurs in his case, was he looking at faces in the fire—his parents' faces, the faces of friends whom he had treated as enemies, of enemies whom he had taken for friends? Were reproachful eyes looking at him from out the past; were threatening glances in the present flashed on him? On the night of Lady Glencora Palliser's meditated flight from husband and home, she sits, as pictured by Mr. Trollope, close over the fire, with her slippers on the fender, her elbows on her knees, and her face resting on her hands. "In this position she remained for an hour, with her eyes fixed on the altering shapes of the hot coals." During this hour her spirit is by no means defiant, and her thoughts of herself anything but triumphant. On a subsequent page we read, accordingly,—after the author has sufficiently analysed her thoughts, and indicated her deep searchings of heart,—that "lower and lower she crouched over the fire; and then, when the coals were no longer red, and the shapes altered themselves no more, she crept into bed." Here again is Mrs. Gaskell's Ruth, awaiting with a strange, sick, shrinking yearning, the crumbs of intelligence Mary may be able to give her about Mr. Donne: "Ruth's sense of hearing was quickened to miserable intensity as she stood before the chimney-piece, grasping it tight with both hands—gazing into the dying fire,

but seeing—not the dead grey embers, or the little sparks of vivid light that ran hither and thither among the wood ashes—but an old farm-house, and climbing winding road, and a little golden breezy common, with a rural inn on the hill-top, far, far away.” Joanna Baillie’s *Night Scenes of Other Times* forget not the witching hour of fire-gazing:

“ Oft as the cheerless fire declines,  
In it I sadly trace,  
As lone I sit, the half-form’d lines  
Of many a much-loved face.”

Surely there is no speculation in the eyes which they do glare withal, who never see faces in the fire—dead and gone faces too, in the living, but oftener perhaps in a dying, fire. And for the little time the faces retain a form amid the dissolving views of those cavernous depths, they seem so near and yet so far.

X.

*NIGHT STUDENTS.*

A CHAPTER OF INSTANCES.

HORACE enforces his caution against idleness, and the ills it brings in its train, by recommending such habits of study, real study, as make the student, if real student, call for his book with a light before peep of day: *Posces ante diem librum cum lumine*, in order to occupy and pre-occupy the mind, *studiis et rebus honestis*. *Si non*, is the warning, bad will come of it. And Persius is complimenting the friend whose faded cheek hangs o'er the midnight page, in the line—

“At te nocturnis juvat impallescere chartis.”

There are apologists for Nicodemus who submit that his coming to Jesus by night was in deference to certain Jewish traditions, which recommend a nocturnal study of the law. A veritably Christian poet sings and says that—

“Night is the time for toil;  
To plough the classic field,  
Intent to find the buried spoil  
Its wealthy furrows yield;  
Till all is ours that sages taught,  
That poets sang or heroes wrought.”

A stanza which has moved some of good James

Montgomery's friendliest expositors to expostulate, "without any wish to make pedantic objections," but with a decided conviction that the stanza is inconsistent with natural truth and a just economy of life. Day is the time for toil, they protest,—night is more proper for repose; and, if spent in mental labour, in addition to other studies pursued during the day, must involve the penalty of substantial damages to health. Night study, or late evening study at least, has its strenuous apologists notwithstanding, who maintain, in opposition to the early risers, that fresher and less exhausted as a man's powers may be supposed to be in the morning, yet, as a rule, this advantage is counterbalanced by the diminution of restlessness and irritability, and the greater power of concentration, produced by the evening calmness. And it is contended, for instance, that albeit a man may possibly write novels with success before breakfast (Sir Walter Scott did), because it is necessary that his sensibility to outward impressions should be as lively and fresh as possible; and though he may of course do anything that comes under the name of business most effectively in the middle of the day; he can hardly be a metaphysician till past twelve at night,<sup>1</sup> except on

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<sup>1</sup> The lion-like professor in Mr. Longfellow's romance, loves candle-light and the still darkness of the midnight hour. "For," said he, "if the morning hours are the wings of the day, I only

peril of putting down all metaphysics as folly. This is alleged to be doubtless owing to the fact that metaphysics require sustained and undiverted attention—such attention as is impossible, so long as the meditator may be exposed to the cries of milkmen, or the grinding groans of barrel-organs; the dull steady sound of late carriages being considered, on the other hand, rather favourable than otherwise to profound reflection. One contemplative essayist on Early Rising comes to the conclusion, accordingly, that for almost all purposes, the evening hours have a distinct superiority over the morning for the civilized part of mankind, whose pursuits do not require daylight, and who know the use of gas and candle-light. Another backs Tom Moore as speaking truly when he said that the best of all ways to lengthen our days is to steal a few hours from the night; only we must steal for a good purpose, not for pleasure or dissipation, else we are losers instead of gainers by the theft. Moderate night-work, by the express testimony of experiment and experience, does no hurt to bodily or mental health, but rather the contrary. Mr. E. S. Dallas somewhere takes note

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fold them about me to sleep more sweetly; knowing that, at its other extremity, the day, like the fowls of the air, has an epicurean morsel—a parson's nose; and on this oily midnight my spirit revels and is glad." (*Hyperion*, book ii., ch. vii.) The professor's humour smells of the lamp, and the oil of it is a thought rancid.

how well, and to what old age, nocturnal toilers and watchers retain their strength and faculties ; how vigorous-minded and strong-framed have eminent astronomers been,—Copernicus living to be seventy, Galileo seventy-eight, Flamstead seventy-three (in spite of a disordered body, and of his persistence, by night and by day, in toil harder, as he said, than a corn thrasher's). Then again we are referred to Bradley, who did as much night-watching, and yet ran out the allotted period of threescore and ten years ; and Maskelyne, his successor as Astronomer Royal, who told fourscore all but one year ; and "grand old Herschel," whose daily labours and night-watching lasted so long, and were performed so well that he may be said to have done the work of three lives, and he reached the good age of eighty-four. His son Sir John renewed the tale of years and of toil. The practical advice offered to whoso wishes to rob the night to the best advantage, is, for the robber to sleep for two or three hours, then get up and work for two hours, and then sleep out the balance of the night ; doing which, he is promised that he shall not feel the loss of the sleep he has surrendered. But constitutions and capacities vary ; and some intending robbers may find the plan laid down for them a mockery and delusion, if not a snare.

Served him right, may be the verdict of all staunch denouncers of night study, when told of Brutus seeing a ghost while so occupied,—the ghost of Cæsar. For

Brutus continued his studious habits amid all disquietudes, and limited his time of sleep to a period confessedly too small for the requirements of health and strength.

Pliny the elder began his studies in summer as soon as it was light; in winter, generally at one in the morning, but often at midnight, and never later than two. "No man ever spent less time in bed; and sometimes he would, without retiring from his books, indulge in a short sleep, and then resume his studies." Sleep he accounted one of the infirmities of nature: *profecto enim vita vigil est.* Gibbon has his sneer at the Emperor Constantine, in the midst of the incessant labours of his great office, employing, "or affecting to employ, the hours of the night in the diligent study of the Scriptures, and the composition of theological discourses;" which latter the "unlettered soldier" would afterwards "pronounce in the presence of a numerous and applauding audience." In subsequent volumes the historian records how Justinian, to the astonishment of his chamberlains, "after the repose of a single hour," would study till morning light. "He sits whole nights in his closet," testifies a curious authority cited by Procopius, "debating with reverend greybeards, and running over the pages of ecclesiastical volumes." Here is Gibbon again, writing of, or at, Cyril of Alexandria: "Under the tuition of the Abbot Serapion, he applied himself to ecclesiastical studies,

with such indefatigable ardour, that in the course of *one* sleepless night, he has perused the four gospels, the catholic epistles, and the epistle to the Romans." Avicenna tells us in his autobiography that, in his early life, for two years he never slept an entire night, so devoted was his zeal in study. Shafei, the first Mohammedan doctor who methodized the science of jurisprudence, and the founder of one of the four sects which are recognized as orthodox by the Moslems, assiduously devoted a third part of every night to study. As the court physician, Maimonides used to visit Cairo at the early dawn ; and on his return to his house at Fostat (the port of Cairo), such, it is said, were the crowds of all classes and orders who came to consult him on all questions, medical, philosophical, and religious, that he had hardly time to snatch a hasty meal ; and he was thus compelled systematically to intrude on the night for his profounder studies.

Akbar is said to have frequently spent whole nights in those philosophical discussions of which he was as fond as for sleep he cared little.

"The dead of midnight is the noon of thought,  
And wisdom mounts her zenith with the stars."

Ronsard and his chum Balf were once co-partners in night studentship. Ronsard would be at work till two or three hours past midnight; and when he made off for bed, he made room for young Balf to replace

him in the study, and no time was lost—"qui [Baif], se levant et prenant la chandelle, ne laissoit pas refroidir la place." It was turn in and turn out, turn about. A sleeping partnership in a novel acceptation of the term.

Ascham's imprudent return to the practice of night-study, in order to complete a poem which he meant to offer to Queen Elizabeth on new year's day, is said to have brought on the illness which carried him off on the penultimate day of December, 1568. Tycho Brahe, sent to Leipzig with a tutor to study law, studied the starry heavens instead while his tutor slept. Melanchthon usually retired to rest shortly after supper, and at two or three o'clock in the morning he was at work: *surgebat mox aut non longo intervallo post medium noctem*.

How could Richelieu find time amid the multitudinous cares of state to write his Memoirs and his miscellanies? Only by night-work. He slept scarcely at all; and his sleepless nights were given up to composition and study.

Archbishop Williams, England's last clerical chancellor, required, from youth to old age, his biographer (Hackett) tells us, but three hours' sleep in the twenty-four to keep him in good health. "This we all knew that lived in his family. It would not quickly be believed, but that a cloud of witnesses will avouch it, that it was ordinary with him to begin his studies at six of the clock, and continue them till

three in the morning, and be ready again by seven to walk in the circle of his indefatigable labours."\* What the Lord Keeper got through, first and last, in the way of reading, must have been a sight for sore eyes: it even makes the eyes sore to think on.

It was not until his severe application brought on a nearly fatal illness, that Salmasius gave up his cherished habit of devoting the whole of every third night entirely to study.

Pareja the painter, slave and colour-grinder to Velasquez, would spend whole nights† in drawing, and all but denied himself sleep altogether, in presumed emulation of his great master.

John Selden is pleasantly pictured by Mr. Dallas in his little chamber in the Temple, poring over piles of black-letter, adding another and another to his host of precedents, and muttering a sneer against ecclesiastics and their tithes, while the faggot on his hearth has burnt itself out, and the white ashes are blown by the night wind about his cell, and settle on his papers and fill the dim air with motes. Fontenelle describes his philosophic friend Varignon, at the time of their lodging in the same house and pursuing the same researches, as the most laborious of

\* Bishop Hackett, *Serinia Rescrata*.

† The night is the time devoted by Hawthorne's Artist of the Beautiful, to his idealizing labours. Daylight, to the morbid sensibility of Owen Warland's mind, seems to have an intrusiveness that interferes with his pursuits.

students, glad to go on with what he was doing at two o'clock in the morning, under the pretext of its not being worth while to go to bed, because he usually rose at four. Dr. Hooke, the Gresham Professor—and associate of Wallis and Boyle—seldom went to bed till three in the morning, and frequently pursued his studies all the night through. Mr. Pepys took credit to himself, as well he might, in his reports to the Admiralty, that in his official labours in that department, involving brainwork as well as penwork toilsome and severe, he had made no distinction of hours between day and night, being less acquainted, during the whole war, with the closing his day's work before midnight, than after it.

Mdlle. de Launay shows us herself, together with the Duchess du Maine, “conspirant toute la nuit avec la plume,” against the Regent, and for the creation of another Fronde, which should be signed with the seal or sign-manual of the writer's wit,—*le cachet du bel-esprit*. Sleep was out of the question, amid those vivacious vigils and *nuits blanches*. By night, in after times, Voltaire used to read to the duchess the chapters of *Zadig* he had composed during the day, though not by daylight, for he was in hiding in her house, and wrote by day in a room with the shutters closed and the candles lighted. Voltaire's fair, frail friend, the learned Mdme. du Châtelet, was noted for passing her night in severe scientific studies, in mastering geometry and writing on physics.

When Bichat returned home exhausted with his labours in the school he had opened for teaching anatomy, physiology, and surgery, instead of betaking himself to repose, he would spend most of the night in editing the papers of his endeared master, Dussault. All too soon he broke down under this system of burning the candle at both ends. That is one, and a fatal, way of making both ends meet.

After establishing himself in business, James Watt, without neglecting it by day, was an indefatigable student by night. Mirabeau at Vincennes worked arduously by night as by day; sleeping but for three hours, and half blind with watching. Incessantly he wrote, or if he stopped to read, it was always pen in hand. The hours devoted by Bessel to his mathematical reading, when he gave up merchandise for astronomy, were stolen from night and sleep. Of Winckelmann, in the days of his Conrectorship of the school of Seehausen, we read that he seldom went to bed, but used to get snatches of sleep on a bench, and devote what should be bedtime to the study of ancient history and literature. Caroline Herschel often sat up all night, especially in winter, to aid her brother, Sir William, in his astronomical researches. Dr. Rittenhouse, the Pennsylvanian astronomer, who diligently with his hands at watchmaking by frauded his fragile frame of legitimate repose ying hard far into the night. Well-known is fling at "his grace of Bedford," with thrice

great Hermes outwatching the sphere. "Often have his candles been burned to the snuff, and glimmered and sunk in the sockets, whilst he grew pale at his constitutional studies." Marat, self-styled *Ami du Peuple* (save me from my Friends! the People might say, with a vengeance), calls particular attention, in his autobiographical *notice*, to the fact that in preparing his book on the English Constitution, he laboured regularly one-and-twenty hours a day, scarcely allowed himself two for sleep, and, in order to keep himself awake, made such an excessive use of coffee without milk that it nearly killed him, and injured him more than the excess of work. It was, we are told, the invariable custom of Napoleon, when campaigning, to go to bed at nine o'clock, as soon as he had dined, and to begin work at one or two in the morning, after the three or four hours' sleep which was all that he either allowed himself or required. Caulaincourt or Duroc would often be up with him hard at work all night; and the Emperor's favourite Mameluke, Rustan, would be a frequent attendant with renewed supplies of strong coffee. Rivarol's plan was to enjoy himself in society by day, and to work hard at his desk by night. Cuvier, besides reading all day long in his young days, read a great part of the night too, without, however, the negative result ascribed to "pale study" by Churchill, in a forgotten poem:—

"Pale Study, by the taper's light,  
Wearing away the watch of night,

Sat reading ; but, with o'ercharged head,  
Remembered nothing that he read."

Rather he might have sat for the same poet's picture in another poem, of one who could avow to Science his will and his ability to toil for her

" —all the day and through the night,  
Toil on from watch to watch, bidding his eye  
Last riveted on science, sleep defy."

For Cuvier at that period no work was too voluminous or too heavy. "I remember well," says Pfaff, "how he used to sit by my bedside, going regularly through Bayle's Dictionary. Falling asleep over my own book, I used to awake after an hour or two, and find him, motionless as a statue, bent over Bayle." In such moods and tenses he might incline to ask with Comus, "What hath Night to do with Sleep?" though not at all in the sense of the original querist.

Dr. John Brown, the physician, tells us of his father and namesake, Dr. John Brown, the divine, how often he was to be seen, far on in the night or morning, bending that "keen, beautiful, intense face" of his over Rosenmüller, or Ernesti, or Storr, or Kuinoel,—the fire out, and the grey dawn peering through the windows.

One of Schleiermacher's letters describes his fellow-lodger and crony, Frederick Schlegel, as getting up earlier than himself, "because I dare not, on account of my eyes, burn lights in the morning ;" but anon

we read, "I generally set to work at ten or eleven at night till towards two o'clock, for from that hour until half-past eight one may have sleep enough." Alexander von Humboldt was between eighty and ninety years of age when he gave this account of himself: "I work almost uninterruptedly till three in the morning. Then I sleep perhaps three hours. I could sleep longer, ten or twelve hours, and have tried it; but I gave it up, because I found that I obtained no greater refreshment in that way." Dr. Thomas Brown, the metaphysical philosopher, began preparing his lectures immediately after tea, and continued at his desk till two or three in the morning.\* Béranger has a song to *Ma Lampe*, by whose light he reads on and on till dawn of day outshines it:

"Toi, ma lampe, toi qui pâlis,  
A ton declin, je vois l'aurore  
Triompher de l'ombre et de toi."

Washington Irving tells one of his correspondents, writing in his sixty-eighth year: "It is now half-past twelve at night, and I am sitting here scribbling in my study, long after all the family are abed and asleep; a habit I have fallen much into of late. Indeed, I never fagged more steadily with my pen than I do at present." Dr. Channing is described, in his

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\* For several nights he was prevented from ever being in bed; and upon one occasion, he did not begin preparing his lecture till one o'clock on the morning of the day on which it was to be delivered.—*Memoir, by Dr. Welsh.*

earlier days, as usually remaining at his desk till two or three o'clock in the morning, and often seeing the day break before retiring to rest. Herein he was fain to emulate Dr. Hopkins. "At night the light in the little office near the house, which he used for a study, was seen burning long after darkness had settled over his neighbours' homes."\* The Siberian author, Polevoy, with his brother Xenophant, used to devote many hours of the night to their joint study of French and German in secret. Lazare Hoche, the republican general, who started in the world as an under-strapper in the royal stables, and whose scanty wages were eking out, in his recent orphanhood, by occasional doles from his aunt, the Versailles fruit-woman, spent upon books every spare sou, and sat up at night to devour them, after his stable toilings and moilings were over. That zealous public servant, the late James Deacon Hume, codifier of custom-house legislation, etc., ruined his health by allowing himself no relaxation, but pursuing his dry labours far on into the morning. While studying in Edinburgh,†

\* Professor Park, of Andover, records of Dr. Hopkins : "He was an intense student. I have learned that he studied fourteen hours a day. He told me that once he allowed himself only four hours' sleep. His study was visible from my father's house, and I recollect that rising very early one winter's morning, I saw the light of his candle streaming through the window."—Voici the hero of *The Minister's Wooing*.

† A Glasgow graduate recalls with fondness, not only the dark mornings on which he hurried to college but half awake, but also

J. C. Loudon acquired the habit of sitting up two nights every week for the purpose of reading, and he kept up the habit long after he had more to write than to read. In preparing one of his encyclopædias he and Mrs. Loudon used to sit up the greater part of every night, for several months, drinking strong coffee to keep themselves awake. Sir William Hamilton was struck down with paralysis in his fifty-sixth year,—the strong man, and he was in all respects a very strong one, having abused his strength and purchased the enormous accumulation of knowledge which distinguished him, by midnight study. One of Jeffrey's letters from Edinburgh to Francis Horner in London, speaks of "the incorrigible Thomson, still letting his watch-tower light be seen in Castle Street, to the corruption of the whole vicinage." Sir Walter's Castle Street doings, a mystery to a part of the vicinage, and corrupting to no part of it, were not done after dark, unless in the sense of being sometimes begun before daybreak. A *Cornhill* essayist on "Work" is clear that if you can work at all at night, one hour at that time is worth any two in the morning: the house is hushed, the brain is clear, the distracting influences of the day are at an end. "There are few really great

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the midnight hours of solitary study, when he heard the clock strike two, three, four, five, through the silent house; the time when he rose wearily to his day's work, and saw the moon hardly moved from that place in the sky which it held when he lay down for his poor hour of rest.

thoughts, such as the world will not willingly let die, that have not been conceived under the quiet stars." That the brain is clearer at early morning than at other times, this writer regards as the merest theory, propounded by those who have not worked early or late ; and he objects to that time\* as one of expectation, when you feel that you are drifting into the cares and anxiety of the day ; whereas at night you only drift into deeper silence and quicker inspiration.

Conyers Middleton, in the Dedication prefixed to his Life of Cicero, compliments Lord Hervey on his seizing the opportunity of the quiet hours, when all around him were hushed in sleep, as the most favourable season for study ; and on his managing in this way, whether as a very late sitter up or a very early riser, to have frequently spent a profitable day before others begin to enjoy it.

Henry Wild, known as the learned (Arabian) tailor encroached upon night hours, as well he might, in his acquisition, within seven years, of Hebrew, Chaldaic, Syriac, Arabian, Persian, Greek, and Latin. That scholarly critic, David Ruhnken, notwithstanding his severe application, was fond of amusements ;

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\* Nevertheless he writes in favour of early work, because the evening hours are the social hours, which few men can, or perhaps ought to, call their own ; but we can always rely upon our mornings ; nobody disputes with us the possession of *them* ; and if we cannot do as much then as at night, we are sure of being able to do something.

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after freely indulging in which, he would sit down all night at his writing-table, to make up for the time thus spent,—he counted it not for lost.

Thomas Birch, the biographer and historian, was noted in early life for the hours he stole from sleep for study. Isaac Watts, during the three years of his residence with academy-keeping Mr. Rowe, pursued his studies with “intemperate ardour,” irremediably injuring his constitution not only by allowing himself no time for exercise, but by curtailing the period allotted to sleep. Garrick’s profession involved him in many a night’s hard study, after the wear and tear of a night’s hard work upon the stage.\* Rousseau describes with keen relish the midnight readings of romances he and his father enjoyed in common—*nous passions les nuits à cette occupation*. There was no putting by the volume till the end of it was reached. Sometimes the father, hearing the swallows at day-break, would say, *tout honteux*, in Lady Macbeth’s style, To-bed, to-bed, to-bed; *Allons nous coucher*; and frankly own himself more of a child than his boy.

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\* The biographer of Charles Mathews the elder, protests against the assumption that no labour attends the vocation of the actor, who, however, is often compelled to steal hours from requisite repose, in order to get up a new part, after being exhausted with perhaps the morning’s rehearsal and evening performance of an old one. “Mr. Mathews’ habit, from his earliest professional life, was to sit up all night, and as many nights as he found it requisite, to study for any particular purpose; for he really studied.”—*Life and Correspondence*, ch. xv.

Elia protests that there is absolutely no such thing as reading but by a candle ; he had tried the affectation (as he terms it) of a book at noon-day in gardens, but it was labour thrown away. By the midnight taper, says he, the writer digests his meditations ; and by the same light we must approach to their perusal, if we would catch the flame, the odour. He rejects as a mockery all that is reported of the influential Phœbus. He boldly asserts that no true poem ever owed its birth to the sun's light. They are abstracted works ; as described in the sequel to Ben Jonson's *Poetaster*,—

“ Things that were born when none but the still night  
And his dumb candle saw his pinching throes.”

Daylight might furnish the images, but for the “fine shapings, the true turning and filing,” the inspiration of the candle is, Charles Lamb contends, indispensable quite: the mild internal light, that reveals them, like fires on the domestic hearth, goes out in the sunshine. Night and silence call out the starry fancies. Milton's Morning Hymn in Paradise, he would hold a good wager, was penned at midnight ; and to him Taylor's rich description of a sunrise smells decidedly of the taper. And who but keeps in lively remembrance the grotesque close of Elia's exposition, or exposure rather, of the popular fallacy, “That we should lie down with the lamb,”—when after avowing, that he, too, in his humble lucubrations

(and *lucubrare* is to write by torchlight), turned his best-measured cadences (for Prose has her cadences) not unfrequently to the charm of the drowsier “blessing the doors,” or the wild sweep of winds at midnight, —he impressively adds, for climax and grand finale: “Even now a loftier speculation than we have yet attempted, courts our endeavours. We would indite something about the Solar System.—*Betty, bring the candles.*”

Mr. de Quincey describes Coleridge as living chiefly by candlelight, after the manner of the class described by Seneca, in the luxurious Rome of *his* days. At two or three in the afternoon the philosopher-poet would make his first appearance; and through the silence of the night, when all other lights had disappeared in the quiet cottages of Grasmere, Coleridge’s lamp might be seen invariably by the belated traveller, as he descended the long steep from Dunmailraise. Naturally, therefore, at seven or eight o’clock in the morning, when man was going forth to his labour, this “insulated son of reverie,” as the other opium-eater words it, was retiring to bed. The other, by which is to be understood The Opium-eater, was himself as pronounced a follower of S.T.C. in the matter of night studies as in that of laudanum-sipping. With some it may be a moot point which of the two men was the greater offender, if not also which of the two things was the greater offence.

Wordsworth is careful to tell us, in his admirable

memoir of that admirable parish priest, Robert Walker, of Seathwaite, that he passed great part of the night, and sometimes whole nights, at his desk. This was in a little room the homely pastor, a veritable working-man, had built on the roof of his house, —slating it, and fitting it up with shelves for his books (he was a scholar, and a ripe one), and for his stock of cloth (literally home-spun), his wearing apparel, and his tools. "There many a cold winter's night, without fire, while the roof was glazed with ice, did he remain reading or writing till the day dawned." Well could Wordsworth admire this in the toilsome old curate, though apt enough to frown down night-students in general, of the type at least of his Solitary among the hills :

" Let not the hallowed powers, that shed from heaven  
Stillness and rest, with disapproving eye  
Look down upon your taper, through a watch  
Of midnight hours, unseasonably twinkling  
In this deep hollow, like a sullen star  
Dimly reflected in a lonely pool."

In other words, *il penseroso* is advised to let *not* his lamp at midnight hour be seen, as Milton's melancholy man would have it be. As for the representative lover, as Thomson conceives and depicts him, he,

" — while the world  
And all the sons of care lie hushed in sleep,  
Associates with the midnight shadows drear ;  
And, sighing to the lonely taper, pours

His idly-tortured heart into the page  
Meant for the moving messenger of love—  
Where rapture burns on rapture, every line  
With rising frenzy fired."

By the way, Thomson's own selected time for composition was midnight. So with Horace Walpole, who tells us, "I wrote the *Castle of Otranto* in eight days, or rather nights ; for my general hours of composition are from ten o'clock at night till two in the morning, when I am sure not to be disturbed by visitants." So Thomas Hood, by his daughter's account, always wrote most by night, when all was quiet, and "the bustle of the day and the noise of us children stilled in sleep." Night was always Byron's favourite time for composition—his hours of rising and retiring to rest being, like his mother's, invariably very late. In all the earlier part of his life, Scott habitually devoted the best hours of the night to solitary study. But before he was middle-aged he reversed his plan, and carried out his new purpose with unflinching energy for the rest of his course. This was, to rise at five, light his own fire in the cold season, and set to work in strenuous earnest.

John Martin, the painter, has related how, in his young days, by close application till two or three o'clock in the morning, in the depth of winter, he obtained that knowledge of perspective and architecture which was afterwards so valuable to him. Of the Swedish poet Tegner we are told that often when his

servant girl came to light his fire in the morning, she found him still with his yesterday's clothes on, continuing the studies he had pursued all night. Perthes was in the fervour and fever of first love when he would sit up half the night, seeking to allay the tempest in his bosom by strenuous application to Kant and his expositors. "Pray do not work too much at night," writes M. de Tocqueville to M. Ampère: "I am told that you work from midnight till five in the morning. I implore you to avoid such excesses. Believe me, that some day you will find yourself suddenly exhausted, and be forced to recruit yourself by a long and miserable idleness." Of Henry Venn Elliott and his brother Edward it used to be said at Cambridge during their university course, "The Elliotts' lamp never went out all the night. The one read early, the other late." Dr. Andrew Bell devoted not only his leisure hours when young to composing a book of arithmetic, but much nightly labour also—so early did he acquire what his biographer, Southey, calls "that uncomfortable and injurious habit." Dr. Robert Chambers tells us that a great part of Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope* was written in the middle of the night, and this from a sad cause. The poet's mother, it seems, was of a temper so extremely irritable, that her family had no rest till she had retired for the night. It was only at that season that the young poet, on the second flat of the house in Alison Square, could command repose of mind for his task.

One of his most vivid pleasures of hope in those days must have been, that his wearifu' mither might betake herself to bed betimes.

Report has it that Madame Dudevant (Georges Sand) rises at three in the afternoon, botanizes until five, despatches her correspondence till six, dines at seven, converses or acts charades till midnight, and then trims her lamp, and sets to work at authorship until six o'clock in the morning.

The merely amused reader of the *Ingoldsby Legends*, a Saturday Reviewer has said, knows not a tithe of the riches of Mr. Barham's work: the comic mask under the presentation of which he shot his learning conceals the fruits of many a midnight watch. Had the author, indeed, lived at the proper time, he would have added, his critic suggests, to the number of those whom Seneca calls *lucifuga natio*—slaves of the lamp, who act as if they thought they had nothing with day to do. "The early rising and early working Walter Scott and Thomas Ingoldsby would seem to have belonged to different races of men." Had they by any chance, it is remarked, been fellow-lodgers, the rising sun at one period of the year, and the lighted candle at another, would have been the beacon which marked the rising of Scott and the setting of Ingoldsby. Of the latter we are told that his wit and facility in composition were never in perfect order before the chimes rang midnight.

At the time Mrs. Gore was writing indefatigably

every kind of literature, and yet keeping open house in the Bois de Boulogne (1837), Mr. Planché, then constantly invited to dinner, and now a pleased remembrancer of "those pleasant evenings," asked his brilliant hostess how she managed it all. Her answer, as given in his *Recollections and Reflections*, was, that receiving a few friends to dinner daily at five o'clock, she was free from company by midnight, when she at once made for her room, and wrote till seven or eight in the morning. She then went to bed till noon ; breakfasted, drove out, did her shopping, paid visits, returned at four to dress for dinner, and as soon as her friends had departed, set to work again for the whole night as before.

Mr. Gerald Massey tells how, in his days of penury, he read "at all possible times and in all possible places ; up in bed till two or three in the morning—nothing daunted by once setting the bed on fire." Dr. Livingstone, in the days he spent as a "piecer" in the Blantyre works on the Clyde, used to read hard by night, as well as place a book by day on a portion of the spinning-jenny, that he might catch line upon line, here a little and there a little, as he passed at his work. Mr. Julian Fane, after a long day of professional business, as First Attaché to the embassy of Vienna, followed by a late evening of social amusement, would return in the small hours of the night to his books, and sit, unwearyed, till sunrise, in the study of them. Nor did his nightly vigils, his

friend, colleague, and biographer, the present Lord Lytton, assures us, occasion any appearance of fatigue the next day. But then he kept in bed till past noon.

The most whimsical perhaps of would-be night students, for literally he was not one, is Mezerai, who used to shut himself up from the light of the sun at noonday, and study by candlelight ; and they tell us that, as if fearful lest this eccentricity might not be generally known by outsiders, he made a polite point of lighting his mid-day visitors to the door.

“O day and night, but this is wondrous strange.”

## XI.

### *MIDNIGHT MEMORANDA.*

**B**Y way of Addendum to the chapter of instances of Night Students, may be noticed the trick of getting up o' nights to jot down a sudden inspiration.

Genius and pseudo-genius have resorted to this memorandum-making ; all anxiety to preserve in black and white what else might pass away like a dream ; wistfully intent on securing a material guaranty that nothing be lost, of the workings of thought, or imagination, or fancy, in hours when deep sleep falleth upon man ; at least upon common men. The inspiration might be forgotten, or the impression of it become faded or distorted before daybreak ; therefore must it be put on record at once.

Memorable Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle, not content with recording at ordinary hours the products of her presumably teeming fancy, kept some of her ladies in waiting, literally in waiting, all night,\*

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\* Some of them may well be supposed to have voted her Grace's *eureka!* as decided a bore as Tom Moore found that of his "literary associate" and shop-friend, Tom Ennis, to be, as recorded in the poet's autobiography. They were members of a debating and literary society, after a sort, at which an original enigma or rebus, in verse, had to be produced by each member in turn, and explained by the rest ; and one night, Tom

to be ready at a call to write down the great thoughts that occurred to her in that witching time. About a century ago a little instrument was on sale called the Nocturnal Remembrancer, of which Southey makes mention in *The Doctor*, where he describes it as consisting merely of some leaves of what is termed asses-skin, in a leathern case wherein there was one aperture from side to side, by aid of which a straight line could be pencilled in the dark : the leaf might be drawn up and fixed at measured distances, till it was written on from top to bottom. Southey appears to have been reminded of this remembrancer by his own reference to the midnight ways and means of Margaret of Newcastle ; besides whom he adverts to Charlemagne's habit of keeping pen, ink, and parchment always by his pillow, for the purpose of noting down any thoughts which might occur to him during the night ; and lest upon waking he should find

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Ennis, who was in general very quick at these things, was extremely mortified at not being able to make out a riddle which the president, Moore's august little self, had proposed to the assembly. The two Toms lived under the same roof ; and after President Tom had been some hours asleep, he was startled by a voice from the other Tom's room, crying out lustily, "A drum ! a drum ! a drum !"—while at the same time the action was suited to the word by a most vigorous thumping of a pair of fists against the wooden partition. "It was Tom Ennis, who had been lying awake all those hours endeavouring to find out the riddle, and now thus vociferously announced to me his solution of it."—*Memoirs of Thomas Moore*, sub anno 1795.

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himself in darkness, a part of the wall, within reach of the bed, was, by his secretary Eginhard's account, prepared, like the leaf of a tablet, with wax, on which he might indent his memoranda with a style. Of the Emperor Julian we know that, after a short and interrupted slumber, he would frequently rise in the middle of the night, to despatch any important business, or commit to writing any urgent thought. Richelieu, who was a bad sleeper, used to keep his private secretaries on the alert in the small hours. He read and composed, as we have seen, after midnight, and between snatches of sleep. Many of his letters are dated at midnight; and it was common with the great Cardinal, when an idea struck him, or mastered him, *le dominait*, to get up from bed, summon a secretary, and have the dominant idea committed to writing straightway. The same thing is told of Napoleon; and Sir Archibald Alison is almost pathetic on the fact that "persons of illustrious birth or of the highest rank, such as Count Narbonne or Caulaincourt," were obliged to wait night after night, during the Emperor's campaigns, sleeping on straw or stretched out on chairs, ready at any moment to be called in, and (literally) dictated to by him. Frequently he roused his attendants eight or ten times in one night. Mr. Carlyle's Friedrich Wilhelm, intensely meditative in the night watches, on occasion, "is capable of springing out of bed, with an 'Eureka! I have found what will do!' and de-

manding writing materials." As in Boileau's lines, with a far different application,—

"Ce soin ambitieux me tirant par l'oreille,  
La nuit, lorsque je dors, en sursaut me réveille."

A modern essayist, who laments that we cannot always have the wax spread upon the wall or the style ready to the hand, speaks of our brightest thoughts as thus failing to find their way into our books, but falling by the wayside, where the birds of the air devour them. What he writes now, he says, he had in his head last night, as he lay abed in the dark, but with far greater force of words and fertility of illustration. Why then did he not spring from bed, grope his way to a match-box, light his candle, and rush to his desk? He can only lazily answer, because he was weary, or might have broken his shins, or might have caught cold, or have lost the bright thoughts, after all, before he had got the pen in hand to give them permanent expression. It is not every poetaster even that with Jonson's can exclaim, while travailing with things to be born in the silence of night, and with but his dumb candle for witness,—Eureka! *le voici!*

"There's something come into my thought  
That must and shall be sung high and aloof,"

and for that purpose must and shall be committed to paper at the moment's notice.

The Jesuit poet Casimir is said to have had a black

tablet always by his bedside, and a piece of chalk, with which to secure a thought, or a poetical expression that might occur to him, *si quid insomnis noctu non infeliciter cogitabat ne id sibi periret*. Milton would sometimes lie awake whole nights, but not a verse could he make; and then on a sudden his poetical faculty would, as Richardson phrases it, rush upon him with an impetus or *œstrum*, and his daughter was immediately called to secure what came.\* Rousseau describes himself as a musical composer in bed, "me livrant tout à l'aestre poétique et musical;" while of the celebrated discourse which Diderot set him upon writing he tells us that he composed it in bed with enormous pains and success, but failing to jot down his succession of ideas on paper as they arose, just at the right time, they gave him the slip. The mishap led to his providing a secretary's help for future night work; and the first was Madame le Vasseur, who, on her entry at earliest daybreak to light his fire, was retained by Jean Jacques, still recumbent, to put his thoughts on paper before it was too late: "A son arrivée, je lui dictais de mon lit mon travail de la nuit, et cette pratique, que j'ai longtemps suivie, m'a épargné bien des oublis." Robert Hall told Joseph

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\* At other times he would dictate perhaps forty lines in a sitting, and then reduce them to half the number."—Richardson's *Memoratory Notes* (1734).

Cottle of his rising from bed three times one night, when projecting his sermon on the death of the Princess Charlotte, to record thoughts which might else escape his memory.

Swift prefaces his *Polite Conversation* with a wish that the public only knew what it had cost the author,—that his “favourable and gentle readers” could but conceive the perpetual watchings, the numberless toils, the “frequent risings in the night, to set down several ingenious sentences that I suddenly or accidentally recollect, and which, without my utmost vigilance, had been irrecoverably lost for ever.” The Queen of Navarre, as Mr. Dallas reminds us, and Voltaire, and Augustus La Fontaine and others, made verses asleep which they remembered on waking. Thomas Campbell is known to have woke up in the night with the line, “Coming events cast their shadows before,” which he had been beating his brains for during a whole week.\* We

\* In a sleep Coleridge composed Kublah Khan ; but then it was sleep induced and informed by opium. Tartini composed the *diavolo* sonata “in a dream in which the enemy of mankind seemed to challenge him to a match on the fiddle. In sleep Benjamin Franklin forecast events with a precision which in the daytime he could never attain, and which, by contrast, seemed the result rather of a second sight than of his ordinary work-a-day faculties. . . . In sleep Condillac would mentally finish chapters of his work which, going to bed, he had left unfinished.”—(E. S. Dallas : *The Hidden Soul.*) M. Maury in his *Etudes Psychologiques*, details his idiosyncratic experi-

are further told of Father Maignan being accustomed to pursue in sleep his mathematical studies, and how, after working out a theorem in his dreams, he would awake in the flush and pleasure of the discovery. Then again, we have what is more to our present purpose, Abercrombie's story of an advocate who had to pronounce a legal opinion in a very complicated case, which gave him much concern. "His wife saw him rise in the night, write at his desk, and return to bed. In the morning he informed her that he had a most interesting dream, in which he had unravelled the difficulties of the case, and had been able to pronounce a most luminous judgment, but unfortunately it had escaped his memory, and he would give anything to recover it. She had but to refer him to his desk, and there the judgment was found clear as light." Clearer and more calligraphical, probably, than if it had been written while awake; for the waker at midnight is apt to make short-hand and rough work of what he has to indite—like the hasty sketches of artistic genius described by Hawthorne, than which you would not anywhere see rougher and homelier things, but which he accounts all the more

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ences and experiments in dreaming; explaining that while he makes these observations, he always has a second person with him to record what he may say or what gestures he may make during his dreamful sleep, and to awaken him suddenly at any moment that may seem to promise a remarkable result.—*Le Sommeil et les Rêves*, par L. F. Alfred Maury, de l'Institut.

valuable for their hasty rudeness ; because the artist seemed to have bestirred himself at the pinch of the moment, snatching up whatever material was nearest, so as to seize the first glimpse of an idea that might vanish in the twinkling of an eye. \*

When Thorwaldsen—in Julius C. Hare's reckoning the greatest sculptor who had arisen since the genius of Greece drooped and wasted beneath the yoke of Rome—had conceived the idea of his finest statue, he worked at his modelling all the evening, till at his usual hour he went to bed. “But my idea would not let me rest. † I was forced to get up again. I struck a light, and worked at my model for three or four hours ; after which I again went to bed. But again I could not rest,”—and again he was forced to rise,

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\* “Thus, by the spell of a creased, soiled, and discoloured scrap of paper, you were enabled to steal close to an old master, and watch him in the very effervescence of his genius.”—*Transformation*, ch. xv.

† At the time of Sir T. Fowell Buxton's absorbing interest in the extinction of the slave trade, we meet with such passages as this in his correspondence and memoirs : “I am very well, but I cannot sleep. As Milton says—‘What have I to do with sleep?’ I affronted E. W—, by not calling her at three o'clock this morning to read to me, but I could not do anything so barbarous. I have less pity on poor Andrew.” And a few pages later, one of his sons speaks of him as walking “into my room at an early hour, and sitting down on my bedside, telling me that he had been lying awake the whole night, reflecting on the subject of the slave trade, and that he believed he had hit upon the true remedy,” etc.—See *Memoirs of Sir T. F. Buxton*, chapters xxv. and xxvi.

and hurry on the realization of his idea. So wholly did the topics on which William Blake thought, or dreamed, absorb his mind, that often, his biographer relates, in the middle of the night he would, after thinking deeply upon a particular subject, leap from his bed, and write for two hours or more. His wife,—his “beloved Kate” for well-nigh fifty years,—would get up from bed when he was under those extra fierce inspirations which were as if they would tear him asunder, while he was yielding himself to the muse, or whatever else it would be called, sketching and writing ; and so terrible a task did this seem to be, that she had to sit motionless and silent ; “only to stay him mentally, without moving hand or foot : this for hours, and night after night.” Beattie was noted, at houses where he was a visitor, for his habit of rising from bed in the witching time of night, in order to write down any poetical thought that had struck his fancy. Happy the little Miss Hannah More in having for bedfellow a yet smaller sister, whom she made, in childhood, the “repository of her nightly effusions,” and who, in her solicitude, lest any of these precious compositions should be lost, used to steal downstairs for a light, and commit them to the first scrap of paper she found.

Of Washington Irving’s narrative of the voyage of Peter Stuyvesant up the Hudson, and the enumeration of the army, we have this account ; that coming home late one night, and finding himself locked out

of his lodgings, he repaired to the quarters of a bachelor friend, and gained admittance, but found sleep less easy of acquisition. "It was then that the idea of that journey flashed through his mind ; and so rapidly did the visages crowd upon him, that he rose from the bed to strike a light, and write them down,—but he could not find the candle, and after stumbling about for a while, he managed to get hold of a piece of paper, and jot down some of his impressions in pencil in the dark." This was in his twenty-sixth year. In his seventy-fifth, he being still a busy author, "sometimes the way in which a thing should be done flashed upon him as he was going to bed, and he could not recall it in the morning." Dr. Dove's *Nocturnal Remembrancer* was awanting. A year later we find him telling a friend, "When I have been engaged on a continuous work, I have often been obliged to rise in the middle of the night, light my lamp, and write an hour or two, to relieve my mind ; and now that I write no more, I am sometimes compelled to get up in the same way to read."

Apropos of the difficulty of recovering a lost thought without breaking its wings in catching it, Walter-Savage Landor tells Mr. Forster in a letter (Nov. 8, 1843), "I got up in the middle of last night to fix one on paper, and fixed a rheumatism instead. Night is not the time for pinning a butterfly on a blank leaf." His biographer tells us elsewhere of his

losing a whole night's rest after making, as he believed, a false quantity of the first syllable in *flagrans*, in one of his Latin *Poemata*, and sending it off to the press as short ; how a letter of emendation was sent after it, to make the syllable long ; and how the second night proved as sleepless as the first, as he tossed restlessly about under torture of a fresh misgiving that he might at first have been right after all ; when suddenly, as the clock struck four on that winter morning, relief came in a joyously recollected line from Virgil, and Landor sprang out of bed repeating that verse of the first Georgic, the two words at the close of which, *ille flagranti*, decide the question. He then and there set down the verse in another letter to Mr. Forster, who remarks that he might as well have waited until daybreak, for he gained nothing by so sacrificing rest ; but it was his old impetuous way. He was often and often out of bed in the middle of the night, to scrawl a strophe in pencil in the dark.

How Sir Charles Barry's sketch of the River Front of his great work was produced, his old friend, Mr. J. L. Wolfe, has borne personal witness. The two had been discussing the subject together till late one night, and Mr. Barry, as he then was, retired to bed without feeling satisfied, and in "that restless state well-known to doubting composers." But his visitor had not been long asleep, when the architect burst into his room exclaiming, "Eureka ! I have got it at

last!" and then and there, by the glimmer of a rush-light, he rapidly sketched out the grand idea that had just struck him. After a short sleep he was at his drawing-board, and when Mr. Wolfe rejoined him, there was the River Front.

It was during his stay at Mechlin in 1837 that M. Victor Hugo rose from his bed and inscribed on the window-pane, with a diamond ring, by moonlight, the lines beginning, "J'aime les carillons dans tes cités antiques, O vieux pays!"—for he was evidently charmed, not annoyed, by the almost incessant carillon chimes in the neighbouring tower of St. Rombaud, which indeed drove sleep from his eyelids, but withal excited the creative instinct in the poet—*réveillant sans pitié les dormeurs ennuyeux*, for whom, however, the poet too would be without pity if they grudged the vigil.

## XII.

### *CONSOLATIONS OF LITERATURE.*

LIFE'S evening and night-time are solaced by the consolations of Literature. But, indeed, when do not those consolations abound?

Chateaubriand said that literature was to him more than a consolation; it was a hope and a refuge. Channing declared his grateful ability, with a book in his hand, to meet all the ills of life, and forget its carking cares. "I think we are not sufficiently grateful for the invention of printing. I know not that I ever mentioned it in my prayers, but it has done me more good than food and raiment. I depend on my book as on my daily bread." Lewis the Sixteenth, during the five months that preceded his death, consoled himself with the perusal of two hundred and fifty volumes. Valetudinarian Chesterfield describes himself as systematic in his pursuit of this lettered solace: "I read a great deal, and vary occasionally my dead company. I converse with great folios in the morning, while my head is clearest, and my attention strongest: I take up less severe quartos after dinner; and at night I choose the mixed company, and amusing chit-chat, of octavos and duodecimos. *Je tire parti de tout ce que je puis*: that is my philosophy." Dr. Primrose seeks to comfort his

Olivia in her sorrow, and to arm her against the censures of the world, by showing her that books are "sweet unreproaching companions to the miserable,"\* and that if they cannot bring us to enjoy life, they will at least teach us to endure it. As for literature "palling on my soul in my dying hour," writes sick and suffering Hood to Rae Wilson, in a memorable letter, "on the contrary, it has been my solace and comfort through the extremes of worldly trouble and sickness." Emphatically he records his deep obligations to literature, and his conviction that a natural turn for reading, and intellectual pursuits, probably preserved him from the moral shipwreck, so apt to befall those who are deprived in early life of the paternal pilotage. At the very least, his books kept him aloof from the ring, the dog-pit, the tavern, and the saloon, with their degrading orgies; for the closet associate of Pope and Addison, the mind accustomed to the noble, though silent discourse of Shakspeare and Milton, will hardly seek, or put up with low company and slang. "Later experience

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\* So, of forsaken Ellen, in Wordsworth's *Churchyard among the Mountains*, we are told, and pleased to be told—

"That studiously withdrawing from the eye  
Of all companionship, the sufferer yet  
In lonely reading found a meek resource,  
. . . And in the garden pored upon her book  
By the last lingering help of the open sky,  
Until dark night dismissed her to her bed."

*The Excursion*, book vi.

enables me to depose to the comfort and blessing that Literature can prove in seasons of sickness and sorrow ; how powerfully intellectual pursuits can help in keeping the head from crazing, and the heart from breaking ;" nay, he adds, with a touch of his perennial humour, and not to be too grave, how generous mental food can even atone for a meagre diet ; rich fare on the paper, for short commons\* on the cloth. "Books are yours," Wordsworth's *Wanderer* reminds the despondent Solitary—

" Within whose silent chambers treasure lies  
Preserved from age to age ; more precious far  
Than that accumulated store of gold  
And orient gems, which, for a day of need,  
The Sultan hides deep in ancestral tombs.  
These hoards of truth you can unlock at will ;"

and, furnished thus, how can he droop, if willing to be upraised ? A later book in the same poem offers us a soothing picture of a gentle dalesman, from whom, in early childhood, was withdrawn the pre-

\* "Denied beef, I had," he punningly puts it, "Bulwer and Cowper ; forbidden mutton, there was Lamb ; and, in lieu of pork, the great Bacon, or Hogg. . . . So far can Literature palliate, or compensate for gastronomical privations. But there are other evils, great and small, in this world, which try the stomach less than the head, the heart, and the temper. . . . Of these Providence has allotted me a full share ; but still, paradoxical as it may sound, my *burthen* has been greatly lightened by *a load of books*."—See *Memorials of Thomas Hood*, vol. ii., pp. 116, 153 sq., 225, 327.

cious gift of hearing. But to no one was he a burthen in the house ; for books

“ Were ready comrades whom he could not tire ;  
Of whose society the blameless man  
Was never satiate. Their familiar voice,  
Even to old age, with unabated charm  
Beguiled his leisure hours ; refreshed his thoughts ;  
Beyond its natural elevation raised  
His introverted spirit ; and bestowed  
Upon his life an outward dignity  
Which all acknowledged. The dark winter night,  
The stormy day, each had its own resource ;  
Song of the muses, sage historic tale,  
Science severe, or word of holy Writ,  
Announcing immortality and joy  
To the assembled spirits of just men  
Made perfect, and from injury secure.”

Cicero, retiring from public life in despair, shut himself up with his books, which had hitherto, he says, been the diversion, but were now become the support of his life. When he lost Tullia, he removed to the house of Atticus, and there lived chiefly in the library, endeavouring to relieve his mind, by turning over every book he could meet with, on the subject of moderating one's grief. “ My whole conversation is with my books,” he writes ; “ yet that is sometimes interrupted by my tears.” The remonstrances of his friends, against his indulgence in regretful retrospection availed little : all his solace was in reading and writing ; and from the treatise on consolation which he drew up for himself, he professed

to have derived his greatest comfort of all. As things grew worse and worse in the commonwealth, books became more and more his one resource ; with them conversing, he "found himself easy, and fancied himself free." And when the time came for him to compose his dissertation on the advantages of old age, he declared the pleasure he found in writing it to have sufficed, not only to afford him relief in all the complaints of age, but to make age itself even pleasant and cheery to him. Montaigne waxes almost fervid, for him, on the solaces of literature "in my age and solitude." To divert himself from a troublesome fancy, he has but to run to his books, which at once fix him to themselves, and drive the unwelcome care out of his thoughts. And one special good point, for which specially he values them, is, that they always receive him with the same kindness. Feltham has an essay on the miseries of an unlettered old age, in which he says that whoso can read and meditate, need not think the evening long, or life irksome : "it is at all times a fit employment, and a particular solace to him who is bowed down with years." Without this, an old man is described as but the lame shadow of that which once he was.

oza, at sixty-five, and an exile, sought and solation in the companionship of his books, friends, whose worth he now fully proved in of adversity. He devoted himself to the Arabic, and also amused his leisure by

writing verses ; his labours of love, in this respect, materially helping, according to Mr. Prescott, to naturalize in Castile those more refined forms of Italian versification which made an important epoch in the national literature. It is a pleasing picture Gervinus paints for us of Machiavelli in his reverses, doffing his rustic garments, soiled with dust and mire, and donning his court costume, the better to feel at home with such high company as awaited him in his library, the choice spirits of old Greece and Rome ; in whose society he was himself again, and forgot the sorrows of his altered lot. In an obscure retreat, not, however, in the depths of some woodland solitude, but in Cordova, "once the gay, capital of Moslem science, and still the busy haunt of men," Garcilasso de la Vega, an impoverished and disappointed man, occupied himself with literary labours, the more sweet and soothing to his wounded spirit, that they tended to illustrate the faded glories of his native land. Montesquieu, who bore witness of study that to him it was a sovereign remedy against all the disquietudes of life, and that he never had a grief or vexation which an hour's reading failed to dissipate, calls the love of study almost the only *passion éternelle* we have ; every other, he says, forsakes us as this miserable framework of ours, to which we owe them all, nears its ruin. Hence he infers the necessity of securing for ourselves a happiness that abides with us at each stage of life : life itself is so short, that whatever happiness is

shorter-lived than ourselves ought to go for nothing. One of Lord Lytton's heroes is a man naturally of an active and impatient temperament, who has been little accustomed to seek those resources which are found in books, but who, in his sick room, and under genial guidance, comes to see and to feel for himself, and in himself, how much of aid and solace the herd of men derive from the everlasting genius of the fit few.

Gibbon hails in his "numerous and select library," "the best comfort of my life, both at home and abroad." Lady Mary W. Montagu writes in her old age that she yet retains, and is careful to foster, her taste for reading; and that, if relays of eyes were to be hired like post-horses, she would never admit any but silent companions: "they afford a constant variety of entertainment, and almost the only one pleasing in the enjoyment, and inoffensive in the consequence." A year later, she assures her daughter that no entertainment is so cheap as reading, nor any pleasure so lasting. A lustrum elapses, and still we find her ladyship of the same mind.—indulging, with all the art she can, her taste for reading. "If I would confine it to valuable books, they are almost as rare as valuable men. I must be content with what I can find." She is solicitous that her granddaughters may resemble her in nothing but the love of reading; for she knows, by experience, how far it is capable of softening the cruelest accidents of life: "even the

happiest cannot be passed over without many uneasy hours ; and there is no remedy so easy as books, which, if they do not give cheerfulness, at least restore quiet to the most troubled mind.” She adds that those who fly to cards or company for relief, generally find they but exchange one misfortune for another.

Richard Baxter was in his seventieth year when he entered the King’s Bench prison in utter poverty, a childless widower, and under agonies of bodily pain. For nearly two years he abode there, hopeless, as Sir James Stephen says, of any other abode on earth. But he possessed his soul with patience, and with calm he awaited a final and a happy release. “ His pen, the faithful companion of his troubles, as of his joys, still plied the Herculean tasks which habit had rendered not merely easy, but delightful to him.” *Douce puissance de l’étude*, is M. Daru’s benison on so beneficent a benefactor, “qui ne permet de connaître ni le poids du temps, ni le vide de l’âme, ni les regrets d’une ambition vulgaire, et qui montre à l’homme une source plus pure, où il ne tient qu’à lui de puiser tout ce qui lui appartient de bonheur et de dignité !” This he said in reference to the Academician, M. de Pré-ameneu ; but it was his own experience as well ; and at the close of his career he bore witness that he had found in the study of literature, throughout a life prolonged in its duration, and chequered in its course of events, *un grand charme, une grande utilité, souvent de grandes consolations.*

In one of his letters to Edmund Malone, Robert Jephson agrees with him entirely that a man who has a relish for literature need never look to old age with despondency. "It is that prospect which comforts me; and so long as there are books, and I keep my relish for them, time may be too short for me, but I shall never last too long for time."\* The keeping one's relish for the book is a more dubious condition than the plenary supply of books. Age affects more appetites than one, and impairs taste and relish as well as digestive power. Malone himself professes to have in general observed † that very few old people can bear to read—"a very melancholy circumstance! for what a relief would this be to pass away tedious hours! . . . If a man has a turn for literary pursuits, and possesses a benevolent heart, he may in some measure defy old age;" for the mines of science are inexhaustible, and objects for the exercise of beneficence ‡ can never be wanting. But Malone's

\* In this respect or prospect, he piques himself on his superiority to "some worthy friends" who depended upon field-sports for their amusement, and being now grown infirm, their existence became a load, because they had no substitute to fill up the space once devoted to bodily exercise.

† He tells us of old Dr. Taylor of Isleworth, that, being asked if he could amuse himself by reading, "No," he said, he could read nothing but the newspaper. "What, at his time of life, should he read for?"

‡ An Irish rector, Dr. Hales, happening to tell John Wesley that when Bishop Chenevix (of Waterford), in his old age, was

conclusion is, that those who have not been early tinctured with letters, and have been much immersed in politics or other business, cannot, any more than the aged, derive much pleasure from books. Swift was an exceptional man among men, as well as an exceptional author among authors, and he showed his crabbed idiosyncrasy in the years when age and bitter melancholy together oppressed him ; when, deprived of the resources of society by giddiness and deafness, and, as Mr. Roscoe, says, "afflicted with the most terrible of all afflictions, by the sense of impending loss of reason," he yet deprived himself of the only solace within his reach, that of reading, because he had "formed a resolution" against the use of spectacles.

The Marquis Wellesley, in laying stress on Mr. Pitt's complete mastership of "all English literature," adds : "I have dwelt on this branch of [his] accomplishments because I know not any source from which more salutary assistance can be derived, to chase from

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congratulated on recovering from a fever, and replied, "I believe I am not long for this world. I have lost all relish for what formerly gave me pleasure ; even my books no longer entertain me. There is nothing that sticks by me but the little good I have done":—one of Wesley's preachers who was present exclaimed at this, "Oh, the vain man, boasting of his good works!" Dr. Hales vindicated the bishop, and Mr. Wesley silenced the preacher by saying, "Yes, Dr. Hales is right : there is indeed great comfort in the calm remembrance of a life well spent." —Southey's *Life of Wesley*, vol. ii., ch. xxix.

the spirits those clouds and vapours which infest vacant minds, and, by self-weariness, render retirement melancholy and intolerable." Frequent in Charlotte Brontë's letters are her avowals of the solace she found in the books sent her by her kind publishers, Messrs. Smith & Elder. What, she sometimes asked, could she do without them? She had recourse to them as to friends; they shortened and cheered many an hour that would be too long and too desolate otherwise; even when her tired sight would not allow her to continue reading, it was pleasant to see them on the table, or even on the shelf. "Si j'avais à recommencer ma route," is Augustin Thierry's testimony, when he had for some twenty years been blind and paralytic, "je prendrais celle qui m'a conduit où je suis." Better to him than even the precious boon of health itself, were the consolations of literature. It was good for him to have been so afflicted, that he might be so consoled. M. de Sacy of the *Débats* as it was, asserted his happiness in living in the serene region of letters, of philosophy, and of history, wherein he found, despite the years that accumulated so rapidly, something of the freshness of his youthful impressions, together with a calm that better befitted his riper age. He exults in the pronounced development of his *goût obstiné pour les lettres*, and counts them happy that share in it, for, verily, they have their reward. For himself he is free and forward to own, as we have seen Montesquieu do before him,

that no trouble\* had he ever met with in life (among such troubles at least as admit of solace because they attack not the deepest places of the heart), which an hour's read did not tranquilize.

Sir John Kaye tells us of Mountstuart Elphinstone, in retirement from Indian affairs, which however warmly interested him to the last, that the great solace of his life was in his books, and that no man ever loved literature more dearly for its own sake. Stimulated by Sir John Malcolm, he had long previously meditated writing a history of India ; in the interval he had lost no opportunity of collecting materials ; and now that he was master of his own time, he assiduously devoted himself to the composition of such a work. But his chief delight seems to have been in the study of the great works of classical literature, including the later fruits of Italian and English genius. Francis Horner, in failing health, cast himself headlong into Italian literature. "What consoles me for all other ill," he writes to an old friend, "I find I can read with as much enjoyment, and as much activity of mind, as at any former period

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\* "Quel chagrin n'adoucit-il pas ? Quels plaisirs ne fait-il pas trouver dans une vie simple et pauvre ?" etc.

Drawing upon his own experiences, he says in the Preface to his *Variétés Littéraires*,—"Aussi loin que je remonte dans mes souvenirs, je ne trouve pas un jour où la vue seule d'un bon livre, à plus forte raison sa lecture, ne m'aît ravi et transporté. Je ne pourrai jamais dire tout ce que ce goût des livres et des

of my life." Hazlitt says that the greatest pleasure in life is that of reading, while we are young ; and he claims to have had as much of this pleasure as perhaps any one. But, "as I grow older it fades ; or else the stronger stimulus of writing takes off the edge of it." That stimulus may be at once a stimulant and a sedative. In Plato's instance we know that the composition of those dialogues which have been the admiration of posterity, was the cheering solace of his declining years. As for the poet, Cowper has told us in detail how the task of arresting the fleeting images that fill the mirror of the mind, of holding them fast, and forcing them to sit, till he has pencilled off a faithful likeness of the forms he views,—and then to dispose his copies with such art, that each may find its most propitious light, and shine by situation, hardly less than by the labour and the skill it cost,

"Are occupations of the poet's mind  
So pleasing, and that steal away the thought  
With such address from themes of sad import,  
That, lost in his own musings, happy man !  
He feels the anxieties of life, denied  
Their wonted entertainment, all retire."

He spoke who best could tell,—or one of the best ; for the task he describes was, in his case, *The Task*, pure and simple.

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lettres a répandu de charme sur ma vie ; quelle force j'y ai puisée contre le découragement et l'ennui ; combien de fois une heure, une seule heure de lecture, m'a ranimé et m'a rendu à moi-même."—Cf. i. pp. xvii, 115 ; t. ii. p. 172.

Mr. Boaden, in his account of Arthur Murphy, pronounces his great happiness in the decline of life to have been, that he had assigned himself "a task;" and that before he went to rest, something was daily or nightly to be done towards the complete translation of his favourite historian, Tacitus. "Thus, though nearly left in solitude, his solitude was never cheerless." Washington Irving's letters abound in references to his interest in composition, and the solace he found in it. At one time he explains his enjoyment of the first conception and first sketchings down of his ideas, "but the correcting and preparing them for the press is irksome, and publishing is detestable." He would like to write occasionally for his amusement, and to have the power of throwing his writings either into his portfolio, or into the fire. So he tells a friend. But his diary is rife with such entries as this: "Ever since I have resumed my pen, my spirits have revived, and my mind is rising into tone." "For some time past, indeed ever since I have resumed my pen, my mind has been tranquil. I sleep better, and feel pleasanter." Two or three years later he is busy in authorship, rather than diplomacy, at Madrid; but it is the act of authorship, or authorship in the act, that charms him, rather than success in publication: "Could I afford it, I should like to write and lay my writings aside when finished. There is an independent delight in study and in the creative exercise of the pen; we live in a world of dreams, but publication

lets in the noisy rabble . . . and there is an end to our dreaming." In his sixty-first year he thanks God on recovering from an illness, and on finding himself "in a train to resume the occasional use of my pen ; and when I have that to occupy and solace me, I am independent of the world." Again, later : "My literary occupations have a great effect in reconciling me to a solitary life, and even in making it pleasant." At sixty-eight he pictures himself scribbling in his study half-an-hour after midnight : "Indeed, I never fagged more steadily with my pen than I do at present. . . . I have a strong presentiment that I shall die in harness ; and I am content to do so, provided I have the cheerful exercise of intellect to the last." At seventy he writes, in reference to symptoms that had obliged him to suspend literary work, and menaced him with exile from his study,— "In sober sadness, I believe it is high time I should throw by the pen altogether ; but writing has become a kind of habitude with me, and unless I have some task on hand to occupy a great part of my time, I am at a loss what to do." After being accustomed to literary research, mere desultory reading ceased to be an occupation ; there being as much difference between them, in point of interest, as between taking an airing on horseback and galloping after the hounds. "It is pretty hard for an old huntsman to give up the chase." He was seventy-three when he wrote to a friend that his health continued excellent, hard though he had

tried it by literary occupations and excitement. There are some propensities, he adds, which grow upon men with age, and he was now a little more addicted to the pen than in his younger days, and much more than his friends allowed to be prudent in a man of his years. "It is a labour, however, in which I delight ; and I was never so happy of an evening as when I have passed the whole morning in my study, hard at work, and have earned the evening's re-creation." Add three years to that green old age, and here, once again, is Washington Irving in the witness-box, at seventy-six : "I have never found in anything outside of the four walls of my study, any enjoyment équal to sitting at my writing-desk, with a clear page, a new theme, and a mind wide awake." Not even when he masqued in very early days as Launcelot Langstaffe, Esquire, or in maturer ones as Geoffrey Crayon, Gent., was he more convinced where his earthly happiness lay, or more susceptible to its influences, than now that, after establishing his own proper name, and being known by it far and wide, he had crossed the half-way line between seventy and eighty, and kept his pen going all the same, in his cozy nook at Sunnyside.

### XIII.

#### *SOUTHEY'S 'DAYS AMONG THE DEAD.'*

IN his well-stocked library at Keswick, Robert Southey's days were by himself said to be passed among the dead. Voices, beloved voices, reached him from the four walls ; from their dust on shelf above shelf the Dead spoke home to his heart of hearts. His books were his associates day by day continually ; day unto day uttered speech of this kind, and night unto night showed knowledge. With these silent Dead, so eloquent in their silence, he took delight in weal, and sought relief in woe ; and often were his cheeks wet with tears of gratitude, in remembrance of how much he owed to them.

"My days among the Dead are passed ;  
    Around me I behold,  
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,  
    The mighty minds of old ;  
My never-failing friends are they,  
    With whom I converse day by day."

Quoting Anacreon and Theocritus, Propertius and Martial, Petrarch and Scaliger, in one of his letters to West, Gray, the poet, interposes the remark, "You see, by what I send you, that I converse as usual with none but the dead ; they are my old friends, and almost make me long to be with them." West

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is therefore not to wonder that Gray, who lives only in the past, is able to tell him no news of the present. The blind old scholar in *Romola* testifies proudly that even when he could see, it was with the great dead that he lived; while the living seemed to him mere spectres—shadows dispossessed of true feeling and intelligence; from the converse of the streets he used to return as from a forgotten dream, to sit down among his books as among real intimates, real counsellors, real friends. To a man of the genuine bookish temper, it has been said, his books shine with beams of kindness and comfort: they diffuse an atmosphere of stillness and gentle warmth; and to such a man the going out of the world into his library is like going from the raw air on a November day into the Tropical Department at Sydenham—"he experiences something positively like a physical change of air and temperature." And nobody, it is affirmed, feels so deeply the debt which a man owes to the best and wisest of his fellows, dead or living, as the scholar who feels towards his books as towards his more fleshly friends: it may be only a sentiment, but it is a very comfortable one, and not sterile. The world, however, is apt to conceive of the bookworm as a mere misanthrope, whose books are to him what men, women, and children are to less retired and refined human beings. "It does not understand the taste of those who care a great deal about the

dead, and care so little about the living; and perhaps it is not unusual for too much sympathy with the one to exclude an active life of sympathy with the other." At any rate, merchants, politicians, and men of fashion are correctly enough said to be inclined to regard the man of inactive habits who spends his life in his library among the past, as a sort of simple lunatic, who, like the demoniac of the gospel, lives among the tombs. They see that bookworms are generally distanced in the race for worldly success and honour, and that they end as they began, in the shade, knowing a great deal about the past, and deriving their chief satisfaction from the company of dead authors, but unappreciated, comparatively speaking, by the present. Verily they have, or think they have, their reward; and there is (on Hamlet's authority) nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so.

A stranger life, in this our nineteenth century, one congenial critic avers, can scarcely be imagined than that of the distinguished French philosopher and *pensee*-writer Joubert, in his house of the Rue St. Honoré; whilst health allowed, at work in his library, a gallery at the very top of the house, where "much of heaven mixed with little of earth;" latterly, when infirmity increased, in bed till three o'clock amidst piles of books—when he could not read, polishing their bindings. Dr. John Brown tells us of his not only venerable but venerated father,

of the same name and style, that his living so much on books made him "live and commune with the dead—made him intimate, not merely with their thoughts and the public events of their lives, but with themselves." Augustine, Milton, Luther, Melanchthon, George Herbert, Baxter, Howe, Leighton, Barrow, Bunyan, Philip and Matthew Henry, Doddridge, Defoe, Marvel, Locke, Berkeley, Halliburton, Cowper, Gray, Johnson, etc., etc.—"not to speak of the Apostles, and above all his chief friend the author of the Epistle of the Romans, whom he looked on as the greatest of men"—with all these he had personal relations as men ; he is said to have "cordialised" with them, to have thought much more about them, so that he would have had more to say to them had they met than about or to any but a very few living men.

Wordsworth said of Southey towards the close of his course, speaking of him at the same time with great feeling and affection, that it was painful to see how completely dead he was become (1839) to all but books. Amiable and obliging he was still, but whenever he got away from his books he seemed restless, and as if out of his element. H. C. Robinson and Rogers had observed this ;\* with Words-

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\* In the Diary of the former, referring to a visit with Southey to Paris in the previous year, we read : "During our stay in Paris, I believe Southey did not once go to the Louvre ; he

worth it was a subject of sorrow, not of reproach. Dr. Arnold said afterwards, that the remark alarmed *him*. "I could not help saying to myself, 'Am I in danger of becoming like him? Shall I ever lose my interest in things, and retain an interest in books only?'" Wordsworth affirmed that if he must lose his interest in one of them, he would rather give up books than men. Indeed he was at this time compelled, in a great measure, by the state of his eyes, to give up reading.

Hazlitt wrote his lectures on the Elizabethan dramatic literature on Salisbury-plain, where, as he said, there are neither picture-galleries nor theatres-royal; but even there, with a few old authors, he could manage to get through the summer or the winter months, without ever knowing what it was to feel *ennui*. His old authors sat with him at breakfast, and walked out with him before dinner. After a long walk through unsfrequented tracts, after startling the hare from the fern, or hearing the wing of the raven rustle over his head, or being greeted by the woodman's "stern good-night," as he struck into his narrow homeward path, our sequestered student could

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cared for nothing but the old book-shops. This is a singular feature in his character. But with this indifference to the living things around him is closely connected his poetic faculty of beholding the absent as if present, and creating a world for himself."—*Diary of Henry Crabb Robinson*, vol. iii., p. 154; cf. p. 167.

take his ease at his inn, beside a blazing hearth, and shake hands with Signor Orlando Friscobaldo, as the oldest acquaintance he had. His days among the dead were passed, but to him they were alive all, and all alive. Ben Jonson, learned Chapman, John Webster, and Thomas Heywood were there ; and seated round, discoursed the silent hours away. Shakspeare was there himself, not in Cibber's manager's coat. Spenser was hardly yet returned from a ramble through the woods, or was concealed behind a group of nymphs, fawns, and satyrs. " Milton lies on the table, as on an altar, never taken up or down without reverence. Lyly's Endymion sleeps with the moon, that shines in at the window ; and a breath of wind stirring at a distance seems a sigh from the tree under which he grew old. Faustus disputes in one corner of the room with fiendish faces, and reasons of divine astrology. Bellafront soothes Matheo, Vittoria triumphs over her judges, and old Chapman repeats one of the hymns of Homer, in his own fine translation. I should have no objection to pass my life in this manner out of the world, not thinking of it, nor it of me." And anon the literate recluse quotes Wordsworth's weighty lines :

" Books, dreams, are both a world ; and books, we know,  
Are a substantial world, both pure and good,  
Round which, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,  
Our pastime and our happiness may grow.

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Two let me mention dearer than the rest,  
The gentle lady wedded to the Moor,  
And heavenly Una with her milk-white lamb."

Readers of Hazlitt may recall another passage in another book of his, where he expatiates delightedly on the characters in the *Spectator*, and muses on how long is it since he became acquainted with Will Honeycomb and Will Wimble,—what old-fashioned friends they seem, and yet he is not tired of them, as of so many other "friends,"\* nor they of him. "What a pity we cannot find the reality, and yet if we did, the dream would be over. I once thought I knew a Will Wimble and a Will Honeycomb, but they turned out but indifferently: the originals in

\* Midwinter, the homeless usher in *Armadale*, describing to the rector his dismal existence as a miserly bookseller's shopman, exclaims, "You are a clergyman and a scholar—surely you can guess what made the life endurable to me?" Mr. Brock, remembering the well-worn volumes which had been found in the usher's bag, says, "The books made it endurable to you." The eyes of the castaway kindle with a new light, as he replies, "Yes! the books—the generous friends who met me without suspicion—the merciful masters who never used me ill! The only years of my life that I can look back on with something like pride, are the years I passed in the miser's house. The only unalloyed pleasure I have ever tasted, is the pleasure that I found for myself on the miser's shelves. Early and late, through the long nights and the quiet summer days, I drank at the fountain of knowledge, and never wearied of the draught. There were few customers to serve—for the books were mostly of the solid and scholarly kind," etc.—*Armadale*, book i., ch. ii.

the *Spectator* still read word for word the same that they always did. We have only to run to the page, and find them where we left them."

Macaulay, in a very celebrated passage, expatiates on the incalculable debt which the man of liberal education consciously owes to the great minds of former ages who have guided him to truth; have filled his mind with noble and graceful images; have stood by him in all vicissitudes, comforters in sorrow, nurses in sickness, companions in solitude, and his placid intercourse with whom is disturbed by no jealousies or resentments. "These are the old friends who are never seen with new faces, who are the same in wealth and poverty, in glory and in obscurity. With the dead there is no rivalry. In the dead there is no change. Plato is never sullen. Cervantes is never petulant. Demosthenes never comes unseasonably. Dante never stays too long. No difference of political opinion can alienate Cicero. No heresy can excite the horror of Bossuet." Even so Sir James Stephen pictures the Historian of Enthusiasm in his library, among chosen volumes that are avowedly his companions, his comforters, his play-fellows, his fellow-labourers, and sometimes his antagonists; but always the cherished inmates of his house, his much-loved books, eloquent or silent at his bidding—"pleasant when I am pleased, melancholy when I am sad, animating when I am languid, leaving no sorrow unsoothed, no mood and temper

of my mind unexpressed, no science uninterpreted, no art unadorned." In fine, bringing him into hourly intercourse with all the noblest spirits who have sojourned in this world, and with those whom the Author of all worlds has inspired to teach us our being's end and aim.

Moore, in his *Diary*, declares the best result of his occasional visits to town, and sojournings at Holland House, to have been the real relish with which he returned to his quiet study, "where, in the mute society of my own thoughts and books, I am never either offended or wearied." Washington Irving expatiates, in one of his letters, on the "deep-felt, quiet luxury" of delving into the rich ore of old folios, and on the degree in which those hours of uninterrupted intellectual enjoyment, so tranquil and independent, repaid him for the tedium and petty vexations so common in social intercourse, and served to bring back the feelings into an harmonious tone after being jarred and put all out of tune by the collisions with the world. Such avowals are frequent in the always interesting correspondence of M. de Tocqueville. For example, in a letter from Sorrento, where he was leading a hermit's life in 1850, he writes: "I have brought as companions a few excellent books. It sometimes occurs to me . . . that on the whole, I prefer living with books, to living with authors. One is not always happy with the latter, while books are intelligent companions,

without vanity, ill-humour, or caprice . . . whom one can summon and dismiss just as one pleases. A capital commendation." From St. Cyr, in 1854, he writes in tones of veneration for "the illustrious dead, in whose society I live." And again, explaining that he could not bring his library with him, and so had selected a volume each of his favourite great authors, he observes in passing: "I open one at hazard; it is almost as if I conversed with the writers." As little at such times he envied more prosperous publicists as Dr. Sheridan professes to have envied Swift, during the Dean's visits to London, and commerce with the living great:—

"While you converse with lords and dukes,  
I have their betters here, my books :  
Fixed in an elbow-chair at ease,  
I choose companions as I please.  
I'd rather have my single shelf  
Than all my friends, except yourself;  
For, after all that can be said,  
Our best acquaintance are the dead."

He who reads these noble records of a past age, says Mr. Thackeray, salutes and reverences the great spirits who adorn it. "You may take a volume from your library and listen to Swift and Pope." The verdict of Socrates, indeed, who himself wrote no books, is against such estimates in general of the efficiency of books; for he says, or by Plato is made to say, in the *Phædrus*, that books cannot be interrogated, cannot answer, therefore cannot teach;

so that we can only learn from them that which we knew before. But this verdict of the master of dialectics has never converted many from the studious and studied ignorance it condemns. The incorrigibles side rather with Wordsworth, affirming that

“ Dreams, books, are each a world ; and books, we know,  
 Are a substantial world, both pure and good :  
 Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,  
 Our pastime and our happiness will grow.”

An octogenarian essayist describes his fondness for sitting in a room with a few books with which he has been long acquainted—old companions, which he has carried about with him by land and by sea for fifty years ; well he knows them—both their faults, to which he is very gentle, and their virtues, which he tries to imitate. “ They have been a comfort both in prosperity and adversity—the best friends that I have found.”

“ A mingled race, the wreck of chance or time,  
 That talk all tongues, and breathe of every clime ;  
 Each knows his place, and each may claim his part  
 In some quaint corner of his master’s heart.”

The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table puts into a homely stanza his collection, be it real or ideal :—

Of books but few—some fifty score  
 For daily use, and bound for wear ;  
 The rest upon an upper floor—  
 Some little luxury *there*  
 Of red morocco’s gilded gleam,  
 And vellum rich as country cream.

The elder Disraeli has been described by his son as "a complete literary character," a man who really passed his life in his library, and upon whose habits even marriage produced no change. Dr. Boyd somewhere pictures the bachelor scholar in his comfortable room, with the blazing fire, and the mellow lamp, and the warmly-curtained windows, upon whom the backs of his books look out like old friends, and who reflects that after he is married he will not be able to afford so many, to say nothing of collateral calls on his time and attention. But Isaac Disraeli allowed wedlock to make no "solution of continuity" in his bookish life. When he got up in the morning, it was to enter the chamber where he lived alone with his books, and "at night his lamp was ever lit within the same walls." Whether in town or in the country, it was practically all the same. In London his only amusement, we are told, was to ramble among book-sellers; and if he entered a club, it was only to go into the library. "In the country he scarcely ever left his room but to saunter in abstraction upon a terrace, muse over a chapter, or coin a sentence." From his soul he must have pitied the manner of man of whom, under any circumstances, it could be said that to him—

"Books are but formal dulness, tedious friends,"

while all his sympathies would go along with Boileau, saying, "Ce n'est pas avec les vivants qu'il faut vivre,

c'est avec les morts" (The life best worth leading is not with the living, but with the dead—that is with books). Leigh Hunt used to sit surrounded by his books, and while he paced the room, or allowed his eyes to wander, "the contents of those familiar volumes were present to his mind as if the pages had stood open before him." Books constituted the happiness of Paul Louis Courier, to whom the world outside of his study appeared so rife with disquieting influences. During his campaign in Calabria a pocket "Iliad" was, he says, "my society, my sole companion, in the bivouac and the watch." One of Moore's most distinguished contemporaries contrasts with that poet's butterfly career of fashion and favouritism his own companionship with the silent but ever speech-gifted Dead :—

"Alone I spent my earlier hour  
While thou wert in the roseate bower,  
And raised to thee was every eye,  
And every song won every sigh.  
One servant and one chest of books  
Followed me into mountain nooks,  
Where, sheltered from the sun and breeze,  
Lay Pindar and Thucydides."

So, and with more to the same purport, writes the poet whose poetry found in Southey its staunchest advocate, and whose often capricious friendship Southey found constant to the last, ill-mated as in so many respects the two men might seem to be. With one or two brief excerpts from Southey's own

familiar letters, these annotations on his "Days Among the Dead" may, or must, close. To his brother Henry he writes from Keswick, in 1804 (a big library his text): "But I never was more independent of society; thank God, the dead are more to me than the living—if they should be called the dead whose works will live and act for ever." And to his attached correspondent, Miss Barker, he writes, four years later, on the occasion of again getting settled with his books: "At last, God be praised, we are gathered together, and earnestly it

my wish that neither they nor I may be removed from our present resting-place till I take up my last lodgings in Crosthwaite churchyard." Never before, he asserts in the same letter, was so poor a man so rich in books, and never did any man who possessed books enjoy them more heartily.

## XIV.

### *TAKING UP A NEW STUDY IN OLD AGE ; OR, NEVER TOO OLD TO LEARN.*

**S**HAKSPEARE'S Norfolk tells his sovereign that he is—

“ Too far in years to be a pupil now.”

But we have the word of Saint Ambrose for it, that *Nulla ætas ad perdiscendum est* : there is no age past learning. Cicero says of old age, *De Senectute*, that it hinders not our continuing our studies, even to the latest period of our existence. Haply he would not have acquiesced unconditionally in what Seneca alleges, that an old man learning his rudiments (*elementarius senex*) is a disgraceful and ridiculous object ; for if the rudiments be of some new study taken up in the old age of a veteran student, there may be more to suggest interest and admiration, not without a touch of the pathetic, than ridicule and contempt. Applied in this sense, the saying of Solon, that the older he grew, the more he learnt, *Γηράσκω δὲ πολλὰ διδασκόμενος*, is by no means, any more than in its wider sense of “ we live and learn,” the saying of an *unwise* man. As an old man Cato learnt Greek ; and as one historian of ancient Rome observes, the language of Homer and Demosthenes could boast no more signal triumph than that it

conquered the stubborn pride of the old Censor ; who continued, nevertheless (if not all the more), to wage war against the fashionable Greek learning.

True as it may be, that to set about acquiring the habits of meditation and study late in life, is like getting into a go-cart with a grey beard, and learning to walk when we have lost the use of our legs ; he who makes these comparisons, Lord Bolingbroke to wit, was ready enough with his answer, personally, to such as asked him what he meant by sowing in autumn, and whether he hoped to reap in winter. Having cultivated his reason when young, he was utterly unable to neglect it when old, and could never abandon the love of study and the desire of knowledge.

As Petrarch advanced in life, the attainment of the Greek language became, in Gibbonian diction, the object of his wishes rather than of his hopes. He was about fifty years old when a Byzantine ambassador presented him with a copy of Homer ; and Petrarch's eloquent letter of thanks finds in the example of Cato some suggestion of comfort and hope, "since it was in the last period of age that he attained the knowledge of the Greek letters." But it would seem that Boccaccio's literal prose version of the Iliad and Odyssey satisfied the thirst of his friend Petrarch, after all. Perhaps if the poet had learnt Greek he would have remembered an Iambic line which speaks of tutoring the old as on a par with physicking a corpse. Charles the Great had never

been taught to write when he was young, and when he tried \* to teach himself he found he was too old to learn. Peter Damianus, as all the world knows, in Mr. Shandy's phrase, could not so much as read when he was of man's estate. And Mr. Shandy, in his chapter of instances, cites Julius Scaliger as forty-four years old † before he could manage his Greek.

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\* And tried hard too—keeping tablets and style under his pillow, and working away at them of sleepless nights.

† But forty-four looks a very early figure, comparatively speaking, as regards the *motif* of this dissertation. The taking up a new study in middle life is, however, not so common as to be void of interest. A medical philosopher says that from forty to fifty a man must move upward, or the natural falling off in the vigour of life will carry him rapidly downward. Alfieri was forty-six when he began studying Greek, and two years' study enabled him to understand and translate the Greek classics. Mehemet Ali, as an Albanian peasant, had not learnt to read in his thirty-fifth year. That was the age at which Publius Terentius Varro learnt Greek. The famous Arabic physician, Rhazes, was forty before he applied himself to his studies. Alfred the Great began Latin in his fortieth year. The Comte de St. Simon was thirty-eight when he began in earnest his social studies. Edmund Cartwright was in his fortieth year when he turned his attention to the studies which brought him fame and pelf,—his weaving invention winning him a parliamentary grant of £10,000. Webbe, the musical composer, is admired for the earnestness with which, despite the stress of his calling, he found time in past middle life to acquire a considerable knowledge of Greek, and even of Hebrew. Kruilov, the Russian La Fontaine, once contested the justice of the opinion of his colleague at the Imperial Library, Gniedich, who had translated the Iliad, that it was impossible to acquire a knowledge of one of the ancient languages late in life; and he laid a wager that

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Baldus, too, eminent as he became in after years, entered upon the law so late in life, that everybody

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he would master Greek. The conversation dropped, and the wager, which was looked upon as a joke, was soon forgotten by all the company, except Kruilov. Two years later we find him claiming the wager from Gniedich, and offering to be put through his examination ; and then it was found that he "was a Grecian of no ordinary calibre." For these two years, it seems, Kruilov, then a man of fifty, had passed his evenings over this study instead of cards, and hence the wager won. At fifty-four, Christopher Thomson found that he was not too old to learn the art of landscape painting, any more than George Cruikshank at sixty was above joining the boy students at the Academy to learn drawing.

When Mr. Cobden, in middle life, took occasion in the course of an instructive speech at the Manchester Athenæum, to express his regret, referring to Italy, that he had not made himself a master, when he was young, of the language of the beautiful peninsula,—the question was at once asked (as the Scotch say) *at him*, by Mr. Leigh Hunt, in the Preface to a *Jar of Honey from Mount Hybla*, why, for his own delight, did not Mr. Cobden make himself a master of the language he so admired ? Was he not known for a fireside reader ? and would not one hour's reading, daily, render such a man more intimate with it in the course of a year, than nine-tenths of its masters in England ?

As a leading journalist contended the other day, the truth is no man will be well-educated unless he recognizes that education must be continued into manhood ; a little of his wasted leisure properly applied will give him what his regular education left unimparted. The complaint of one gentleman, for instance, that although he had been taught all about the cities of Greece and Asia Minor, he had been left in ignorance of the geography of the United States of America, was disposed of with an ironical note of exclamation, " Tremendous and irreparable loss !" It had never, seemingly, occurred to him that with an

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imagined that he intended to be an advocate in the

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Atlas and a Gazetteer he could learn all the chief points of the geography of the United States in a single rainy afternoon. A well-taught mathematician can, simply as such, teach himself botany and geology, and other sciences of observation, with marked facility; just as a well-trained classic may read French or Italian history without exertion in his arm-chair before the fire. The complaint about not having been "taught" this or that in early youth is to be summarily dismissed as "the refuge of inert minds."

A man of five-and-thirty, it has been all too truly alleged, is apt, if you talk to him of higher moral purpose, wider intellectual sympathies, new and varied pursuits, to reply as if the book of his life were instantly on the point of being sealed and made up; as if he held the opportunity of adding new pages to be for ever vanished. He sighs, "Ah, si jeunesse savait," and tacitly surrenders his earlier aspirations. One would suppose, in the words of an anonymous essayist on *Mental Ripeness*, that youth was "not only the seed-time, but the chief season for harvest as well," and that, as far as ideas are concerned, there is no more growth, no further ripening and mellowing. Most men, in fact, afford plenty of ground for the charge against them, that they are wont to give up their game of life, in these respects, too easily; and that in this sense they are inclined to fancy themselves older than they are, and, not without a certain indolent feeling of relief, to make every year count for two.

In Addison's time, it seems, the greatest part of our British youth lost their figure, and grew out of fashion by the time they were five-and-twenty, and had nothing left to recommend them, but "lie by" the rest of their lives among the lumber and refuse of the species. It sometimes happened, indeed, Mr. Spectator playfully remarked, that for want of applying themselves in due time to the pursuits of knowledge, they took up a book in their declining years, and grew very hopeful scholars by the time they were threescore.

other world.\* Lamblike to the full in flavour (the inseparable adjunct of mint-sauce included, or understood), is Elia's letter to an old gentleman whose education had been neglected (formally a parody on De Quincey's Letter to a Young Man under similar disadvantages), wherein he discusses the question whether a person at the age of sixty-three, with no more proficiency than a tolerable knowledge of most of the characters of the English alphabet at first sight amounts to, may hope, by dint of persevering application, to arrive, within an assignable or presumable number of years, at that degree of attainments which shall entitle the possessor to the character of a "learned man." Elia's anxious inquirer, in his grand climacteric, is pretty much on a par, educationally speaking, with Mr. Boffin, when that Golden Dustman resorted to wooden-legged Silas Wegg, at his stall in the streets, as a coach in the classics.

"Late as it is, I put myself to school,  
And feel some comfort, not to be a fool."

So Pope Englishes the "Restat ut his ego me ipse regam solerque elementis," of Horace. Madame Jourdain is wishful to hear from her Bourgeois Gentilhomme whether he wants to learn dancing at a

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\* "No wonder," adds Yorick's interlocutor, "when Eudamidas heard Xenocrates at seventy-five disputing about *wisdom*, that he asked gravely, 'If the old man be yet disputing and inquiring concerning wisdom—what time will he have to make use of it?'"  
—*Tristram Shandy*, vol. v. chap. xlii.

time of life when he must expect to be losing the use of his legs. And in spite of all his impatient rebukes of her incontinent clack, she goes on : “ N’irez-vous point, l’un de ces jours, au collège vous faire donner le fouet, à votre âge ? ” *Pourquoi non ?* is Monsieur Jourdain’s spirited rejoinder. M. de Tocqueville used to propound it as one of his firmest opinions, that life has no period of rest ; that external, and still more internal, exertion is as necessary in age as in youth—nay, even more necessary. Man, he would say, is a traveller towards a colder and colder region, and the higher his latitude, the faster he ought to walk. One must not live upon what one has already learnt, one must learn more. “ Shall I confess to you, madame,” he writes to the Comtesse de Circourt, in 1853, “ that I have gone back to school, and that I am learning a language just as if I were twelve years old ? ” This was German ; and to his French taste it was “ abominable”—all so strange to a Frenchman—the root, the construction, and the mode of expression ; “ and the absurd part of it is, that this ungrateful study interests me.” With Monsieur Jourdain we might utter a *Pourquoi non ?* Or with Mistress Meg Dods, of the Cleikum inn, a *What for no ?* But as Balzac’s Ferragus tells his daughter, “ Va, ma chère fille, il y a peu d’hommes qui puissent à mon âge avoir la patience d’apprendre le portugais et l’anglais,” above all when they are French\* to the core.

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\* Says Lord Castlewood to the pretty remonstrant who would

The most French of the kings of France, as M. Demogeot calls him, Henry the Fourth, betook himself in his *vieux jours*, not without a growl however (*tout en grondant*), to learn Spanish, "comme Caton le censeur avait appris le grec." The great John Sobieski learnt Spanish at an advanced age, amidst the double double toil and trouble of state cares and crosses—perhaps in a measure to lessen the weight of them, and secure intervals of oblivion.

After all, the most encouraging things the Autocrat of the Breakfast-table finds in Cicero's treatise *De Senectute*, are the stories of men who have found new occupations when growing old, or kept up their common pursuits in the extreme period of life. He cites Cato not only as learning Greek when he was old, but as wishing to learn the fiddle, or some such instrument (*fidibus*), after the example of Socrates; and Solon as learning something new, every day, in his old age—a fact the sage loved to proclaim. And here we have the confession of faith and practice, of Dr. Holmes's double, who has no notion of "giving up" because the almanac or the Family Bible says that it is about time to do so, and who feels that, when he has work on hand, there is less time for it

with him to adopt new courses, "I can speak French and n very well, and why? because I was taught both in the . A man who learns them late can never get the practice tongue. And so 'tis the case with goodness, I y age."—*The Virginians*, ch. lxix.

than when he was younger, and accordingly finds himself giving his attention more thoroughly, and using his time more economically than ever before ; so that he can learn anything twice as easily as in his earlier days : "I am not, therefore, afraid to attack a new study. I took up a difficult language a very few years ago with good success, and think of mathematics and metaphysics by-and-by." No sharer, he, in the shudder of *le gras Errard* in Boileau, with his plaintive protest, "Moi, dit-il, qu'à mon âge, écolier tout nouveau," etc.

John Speed was sixty-six when he turned author. When John Knox repaired a second time to Geneva, his age bordered upon fifty, but he applied himself to study with all the ardour of youth, and eventually mastered Hebrew, which he had no opportunity of learning in early life. Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck was in her seventy-fourth year when she wrote, from her sick bed, "I am now first learning the Hebrew Psalms by heart." The books to be seen on her bed, at this time, and later, were, besides Hebrew, Greek, Latin, with her favourite Port Royalists, mingled together ; as soon as light dawned, her books were brought to her ; and what she called her "spiritual breakfast" was as necessary to her as her daily bread.

Philologists tell us how even "Godofredus Hermannus" had to learn Sanskrit in his old age, in order to refute the empirical views of Madvig on Latin

grammar. It is related of James Watt that, when upwards of seventy, he imagined his intellectual faculties (which in fact remained unimpaired to the last) to be on the decline, and determined accordingly to put them to the test of undertaking some new study. "Having selected the Anglo-Saxon language for this experiment, he mastered it with a facility which proved that there was little ground for his fears." He had at any time needed but prompting to take up and conquer any subject; and Robison states that he learnt German in order to read Leupold's *Theatrum Machinarum*, because the solution of a problem on which he was engaged seemed to require it; and that similar reasons led him to study Italian. That ingenious inventor and scientific instrument maker, Jesse Ramsden, at an advanced age mastered French sufficiently to read and appreciate Boileau and Molière. Rousseau piqued himself on getting fonder and fonder of new studies, the older he grew; and, *me voilà comme un vieux radoteur*, he exclaims, in *Les Confessions*, all agog with eager interest in his latest hobby, *la botanique*. Elsewhere his reflections frequently take the sombre tone of one who feels that for old age there remains but one thing to learn—and that is, how to die. "L'étude d'un vieillard est uniquement d'apprendre à mourir." To be taught the measure of his days, what it is. He speaks of refusing to 'parley with all new ideas whatsoever, that his tranquility may be undisturbed. But,

“Je deviens vieux en apprenant toujours,” is the motto of his *Troisième Promenade*. At sixty-five he pictures himself in *Les Rêveries* devoted to an ardent study of the “Regnum vegetale,” and to open-air verifications of his text-book.

We read of the system of competitive examinations in China, which has the credit of being quite as complete as anything of the kind in Western lands (the subjects of study, however, to an English mind, being somewhat peculiar, as mathematics, geography, and the natural sciences are utterly disregarded, and are replaced by the native classics, which consist mainly of the writings of Confucius and Mencius),—that should an undergraduate be able to attend the examinations regularly till he becomes *eighty years old* without attaining the coveted rank of bachelorship, the Emperor confers upon the aged candidate the titles and privileges of a graduate. It becomes the duty of the governor to report such cases, and to ask for them the customary token of approval on the part of the Emperor. On the receipt of the title, the old man procures the golden button, which he wears as a badge of Imperial respect. The clerical author of *Social Life of the Chinese*, tells us the bestowal of the title on the octogenarian is designed as a testimony of the approbation of the Emperor, who would encourage the pursuit of letters even to extreme old age.

Sir William Miller, of the Scotch bar, who after-

wards, with a less familiar title, dignified the bench, is characterized by Lord Cockburn as a lover of knowledge for its own sake, who not only systematically augmented his learning, but continued the improvement even of his faculties, when far beyond the period of life at which the mental powers begin, or are generally permitted, to decline. Jeffrey visited him at his country seat when he was eighty-seven, and wrote to a friend : "He is very deaf, and walks feebly, but his mind is as entire and vigorous as ever. When I came in he was in the middle of a great new treatise on the properties of the Ellipse, which he had just got from Germany." The men who are too old to learn are generally, says Hartley Coleridge, men of little early culture, "practical" men, who have done well in the world, or such as for years have been the oracles of a club, a combination, or coffee-room, or a country-town with a "genteel" neighbourhood ; and who are possessed with a comfortable assurance that whatever they do not know, cannot be worth knowing. A noble lord, previously quoted in these pages, whose example in this one instance at least conformed with his precept, is strenuous in his contention, that we lose the true advantage of our nature and constitution, if, when the body is weakening with wear, we suffer the mind to come, as it were, to a stand. The mind should then, on the contrary, as it may, continue still to improve and indulge itself in new enjoyments.

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At the age of eighty-three, Dr. Richard Cumberland, the erudite Bishop of Peterborough—his promotion to which see he declares, in his Preface to *Sanchoniathon*, to have been a greater surprise to himself, the hardworking parish priest of Stamford, than to anybody else—commenced the study of Coptic, Dr. Wilkins having presented him with an early copy of his New Testament in that language. The Abbé Fleury was sixty-six years old when he conceived the plan of his *magnum opus*, the Ecclesiastical History, and then began the arduous labour in good earnest. Houbigant, who died in the ninety-seventh year of his life, took to learning English not very long previously, and became sufficiently conversant with it to translate into French Sherlock's *Sermons*, and Leslie's *Short and Easy Method with the Deists*. It was not until late in life that Giacomo Morelli, one of the most eminent bibliographers of modern times, became acquainted with the Greek and French languages. The father of Captain Cook was but a year or two short of his eightieth when he learnt to read, simply that he might gratify a parent's pride and love, by perusing the narrative of his son's first voyage round the world. Wiffen, the translator of Tasso, began studying Hebrew and Welsh towards the end of his career. At the age of sixty-four the Russian poet Petrov began to learn the modern Greek language. Not until the autumn of his days did Allan Ramsay the younger acquire some know-

ledge of classical Greek. Goethe began his study of Oriental literature and wrote his "West-Eastern Divan" in his sixty-fourth year. We find Mr. J. Hookham Frere busy at Hebrew after the loss of his wife, Lady Errol, left him desolate in old age. The Scotch judge, Lord Glenlee (already mentioned by another name, his own), who was honourably noted for his acquaintance with French, Italian, and Spanish, betook himself to German when nearing his ninetieth year. That is possibly double, or nearly double, the period intended by Anstey in his couplet alleging that

"\_\_\_\_ in every science, in every profession,  
We make the best progress at years of discretion."

The clerical author of an essay on Growing Old records the interest with which he had heard how a venerable professor of fourscore wrote in the last few weeks of his life a little course of lectures on a certain debated point of theology. "He had outgrown his former notions upon the subject. The old man said his former lectures upon it did not do him justice. Was it not a pleasant sight—the aged tree bearing fruit to the last? How it must have pleased and soothed the good man, amid many advancing infirmities, to persuade himself (justly or unjustly), that in the most important respect he was going onward still."

Turner was long past middle life when he applied

to his old friend Trimmer to coach him in Greek. A biographer describes him as suffering agonies with the first declension, and in despair at the dual number: "he is too old, his brain does not retain with the sure grip it once did;" so he throws down his *Delectus* with a sigh, and gives up Greek. But many chapters later in the Life we read, that one of the most admirable things about Turner's mind was, that it never grew old, never froze and petrified into unchangeable fixity, but remained to the last thirsty for knowledge, and ready to grow as the world grew. The interest he latterly took in the science of optics is adduced as proof.

Charles Kemble, after he left the stage, relieved his enforced leisure by teaching himself Greek. Mezzofanti had passed his fiftieth year when he added to his already large stock of languages, Chinese, Abyssinian, Californian, some of the North American Indian languages, and even what has been called the "impossible" Basque.\*

William Blake, the artist, as we read in his Life, at sixty-seven years of age, with characteristic fervour and activity of intellect, applied himself to learning Italian, in order to read Dante in the

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\* According to a popular tradition, the devil once tried to learn Basque, and shut himself up for that purpose through seven years, but had to abandon the task in despair. The author of the first guide to it gave his book the grand title of *El Impossible Vencido*.

original. Helped by such command of Latin as he had, he taught himself the language in a few weeks ; sufficiently, that is, says Mr. Gilchrist,\* to comprehend that difficult author substantially, if not grammatically : just as, earlier in life, he had taught himself something of Latin, French, and even Greek. Dr. Marshall Hall at sixty-five devoted himself, a retired physician, to the study of Hebrew, in Rome. Thomas Moore, calling on Sydney Smith in 1844, was not a little surprised as well as amused to find the aged Canon of St. Paul's, now at the very close of his earthly course, industriously employed in teaching himself French. There was his copybook lying open on the table, with all the verbs and their moods and tenses, etc., written out as neatly by his own hand as any young boarding-school Miss could have done it. "What an odd pastime for such a man, and how he would have laughed at any other septuagenarian so employed!"†

Coleridge's accomplished disciple, the author of "Spiritual Philosophy,"—that eminent surgeon, the late Mr. J. H. Green,—who spent very many years in

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\* Life of Blake, vol. i., p. 332.

† Moore afterwards recollects, and journalizes the recollection, that one day, at Bowood, Sydney Smith began, apropos to nothing, to speak French in the middle of dinner, and went on with some commonplace sentences in that language, looking much pleased the while. "This was now explained to me : he was practising his school lessons upon us."—*Diary of T. Moore*, June 3, 1844.

retirement and study, by way of thorough preparation for that work,—after renewing his familiarity with Greek, became at sixty a diligent learner of Hebrew, and at a still more advanced age sought acquaintance with Sanskrit. Professor Jowett, in his speech at the Glasgow "Scott Centenary" banquet, enumerating the worthies of Balliol who came to Oxford from the Glasgow University, included "my aged friend Mr. Christie, who takes at the age of eighty as keen an interest in literature as he ever did ; and quite lately I found him studying a new language." Knowledge, says Lord Chesterfield, is like power in this respect, that those who have the most are most desirous of having more. "It does not cloy with possession, but increases desire ; which is the case with very few pleasures." Ulysses is a representative man, a man of men, an old man of old men, when pictured by the poet as

"—— this gray spirit yearning in desire  
To follow knowledge, like a sinking star  
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought."

## XV.

### *NIGHT THOUGHTS, FEARS, AND FANCIES.*

LUTHER made Christendom his confidant, in his table-talk, as to the troubles he endured by night, the thoughts that then possessed him, the fancies that befell and the fears that beset him. "When I wake up in the night, the devil immediately comes to me and disputes with me, and gives me strange thoughts, until, at last, I grow enraged beyond endurance, and give him ill words. 'Bah, beast!' I say," etc. With a psalm, or some sentence out of St. Paul, would Doctor Martin lay him down to rest and sleep thereupon; but the "cogitations which come of the devil" he found extra hard to be put by: "oftentimes merriment and buffoonery serve the turn,"—for the Satan of Luther's experience was of saturnine temperament, and could not abide mirth or music. Again, for one other such passage out of many: "When the devil comes to me in the night, I say to him, 'Devil, I must now sleep; for it is the command and ordinance of God that we labour by day, and sleep by night.'" A good supper was one of the Reformer's prescriptions in similar cases of satanic visitation in the small hours, but he owned that the remedy would not do for everybody, and was especially inapplicable to young people. But as

to himself, an old man, he found a cup of wine had often the effect of driving away evil thoughts, by sending him comfortably to sleep for the night. Evidently Martin Luther was conversant with the power night had of bringing troubles all its own, as well as of intensifying and exaggerating the troubles of the day. Not his, not for such natures as his, the poet's placid experience, complacently expressed, referring to the hush of night, when all sounds of life that jarred his sick ear through the livelong day were past, and his bosom's secret, solitary woes found rest in the calm lap of silence,—

“ The sweet and solemn influence of the hour  
Steals o'er me, like the coming on of rest;  
My soul lies hushed beneath the gentle power;  
The shapes of fear and anguish, that infest  
My thoughts by day, seem softened now and changed,  
Like the relenting looks of one estranged.”

Whether Susannah in *Tristram Shandy* be right or not in thinking death is best met in bed, Sir Walter Scott was sure that trouble and vexation are best met elsewhere. The watches of the night, he said, press so wearily when disturbed by fruitless regrets and sombre anticipations. A younger but now dead and gone writer of fiction similarly remarks, that the thousand events of the day, even the most unimportant, will divert our thoughts, however occupied, into other channels, although perhaps only for the passing minute; but there is no relief to that long,

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depressing wakefulness of night, which throws the shade of its own obscurity round our imaginings, forcing us to look at every hope and prospect through its dispiriting and gloomy medium. In another of his books he describes in the instance of his heroine, in vain essaying to find in slumber a refuge from her wretchedness, how through the long, dreary hours of night, all her meditations were affected by its gloom, so that the merest unpleasantry, that would scarcely have cost a thought of uneasiness in the daytime, became magnified by undiverted thought into an overwhelming misery. Elsewhere again: "The terrible 'demon of the bed,' that invests our lightest sorrows with such hopeless and crushing anxiety, reigned triumphant over its gentle victim." The line in one of Shakspeare's Sonnets is feelingly true—

"And night doth nightly make grief's length seem stronger."

When told the message to hear which Varney has roused him from sleep, Tony Foster exclaims, that to have been told it in broad day would have been well enough—"but at this dead hour, and by this dim light, and looking on thy pale face,"—it was the reverse of well. To Franz, in Dumas, "the history of the scuttled ships, which had appeared very improbable during the day, seemed all too probable at night." It was at night and in bed that Madame, Mère du Régent, "realized" the horrors of the Grand

Monarque's doings in the Palatinate, and the reality became then and there too much for her,—beyond bearing by German flesh and blood. "Toutes les fois que je voulais m'endormir, je revoyais tout Heidelberg en feu : cela me faisait lever en sursaut, de sorte que je faillis en tomber malade." Charlotte Bronté, in her Brussels sojourn, after being never a good sleeper, became unable to sleep at all ; whatever had been disagreeable or obnoxious to her during the day, was presented when it was night with exaggerated vividness to her disordered fancy. Every fear respecting those whom she loved, became, says her biographer, a terrible reality, oppressing her, and choking up the very life-blood in her heart ; and those nights were times of sick, dreary, wakeful misery, precursors of many such in after years. Coleridge used to expatiate upon the reasons why distressing circumstances always seem doubly afflicting at night—the horizontal position of the body being, by his contention, one main cause ; the blood then circulating with greater force and rapidity to the brain than when the body is perpendicular.

Especially is it the solitary that is subject to these nocturnal agitations in an aggravated degree. As with Jocelyn—

" Mais quand je rentre seul dans ma pauvre demeure,  
Que ma porte est fermée et que la longue nuit  
Excepté dans ma tempe a fait tomber tout bruit,  
Ah, ma sœur ! c'est alors que mon âme blessée  
Sent son mal, et retourne en saignant sa pensée,

Comme on retourne en vain le fiévreux dans son lit.  
C'est alors qu'une image ou l'autre m'assaillit," etc.

At night, when all the house is asleep but yourself, do you not, Mr. Thackeray asks of his "jolly friend," get up and peep into your skeleton closet? What though, in William Spencer's diction, no bloodless shape your way pursues, no sheeted ghost your couch annoys; "visions more sad your fancy views, visions of long departed joys!" A man thinks of so many things when he is alone by himself of a night, complains Lindsay in Mr. Hannay's story; "things come popping up out of his memory and look him in the face—things that he thought he had sunk, they come to the surface like a corpse in the sea, detaching itself from the shot." When Eustace Conyers moots the opinion that life is an awful thing, "Yes, under one aspect," assents the placid Don: "When one wakes suddenly at night—disagreeable thing that!" Another practised hand of the same craft, if not exactly a right hand with exactly the same cunning, strings together sententious notes of exclamation, in a series of sequent sentences, upon what a wretched thing it is, that waking in the middle of the night and remaining awake for several hours—how gigantic all our difficulties appear, looked at in the "cold light of stars" or under the moonbeams which insult us by their very placidity—with what frightful accuracy we then collate all our sins of omission and commission, and review but cannot revise them. "Nemesis

rides rough-shod over us: we twist, and turn, and writhe, and every movement disturbs a fresh host of phantoms of the past, who forthwith start into motion, and gibber, and mock, and deride, and madden." "And we whine *mea culpa*, and pray God to drug our memories till the morning." Another brother of the pen dilates in like mood on the spectres that come in the night-season, or at that worst of all times, when the night is dead and the day is not yet born, when, if it be our doom to lie awake, all disagreeable thoughts and fancies claim us for their own. Countless, by such reckoning, are the costly items that present themselves to our dreary gaze at "that unholy four o'clock waking, and chase slumber from our fevered eyelids." Currer Bell's Professor in the daytime kept his griefs under cover, almost under lock and key, on the silent system; it was only after he had closed the door of his bedroom that he somewhat relaxed his severity towards these "mordeous nurslings," and allowed vent to their language of murmurs: "then, in revenge, they sat on my pillow, haunted my bed, and kept me awake with their long, midnight cry." Of her solitary, again, Currer Bell says in another work, that for him night is an unfriendly time, for sleep and his nature cannot agree; strange starts and struggles harass his couch; and the sinister band of bad dreams, with horror of calamity, and sick dread of entire desertion at their head, join the league against him. Charlotte Brontë

wrote as one indeed and indeed *haud ignara malorum* such as these. One of her intimate associates bore witness to her subjection to gloomy and frightful imaginations: "she could not forget the gloom, nor sleep by night." At Brussels she would try to walk herself into such a state of bodily fatigue as must induce sleep, and retrace her footsteps in the shades of evening, sick for want of food, but not hungry; fatigued with long continued exercise, yet "restless still, and doomed to another weary, haunted night of restlessness." In the depth of every heart, as Nathaniel Hawthorne has it, there is a tomb and a dungeon, though the lights, the music, and revelry above may cause us to forget their existence, and the buried ones, or prisoners, whom they hide. But sometimes, and oftenest at midnight, he goes on to say, those dark receptacles are flung wide open. "In an hour like this, when the mind has a passive sensibility, but no active strength; when the imagination is a mirror imparting vividness to all ideas, without the power of selecting or controlling them; then pray that your griefs may slumber, and the brotherhood of remorse not break their chain." Bad enough without these last is the nightmare of the soul, the heavy, heavy sinking of the spirits, the wintry gloom about the heart, the indistinct horror of the mind, blending itself with the darkness of the chamber, which the author of *Septimius* so graphically depicts. The silence of the night, in Thackeray's phrase, is peopled

with the past: sorrowful remorses for sins and shortcomings—memories of passionate joys and griefs rise out of their graves, both now alike calm and sad: eyes, as we shut ours, look at us, that have long ceased to shine.

The sensations of the sleepless comprise a large gamut, varying widely in kind, infinitely in degree. Now we have a Schleiermacher in his eleventh year spending “several sleepless nights” in consequence of not being able to come to a satisfactory conclusion concerning the “mutual relation between the sufferings of Christ and the punishment for which those sufferings were a substitute.” Now we have a Sir Charles Napier, by his own account, when sometimes irritated by neglect, or more than usually stung by a sense of injustice, tossing about all night in a half-frantic state, shouting, praying, and blaspheming. The picture in Thomson’s *Seasons* is scarcely too high-coloured for him, in that evil case:

“ — On bed  
Delirious flung, sleep from his pillow flies,  
All night he tosses, nor the balmy power  
In any pasture finds; till the grey morn  
Lifts her pale lustre on the paler wretch.”

The harassing excitement of suspense, and of suspensive expectation, is graphically touched by a later hand:—

“ To wake and hear all night the wandering gnat  
Sing through the silent chambers, while Alarm,

In place of Slumber, by the haunted couch  
Stands sentinel. . . .  
To count ill chances in the dark, and feel  
Deserted pillows wet with tears, not kisses,  
Where kisses once fell.—But now Expectation  
Stirs up such restless motions of the blood  
As suffer not my lids to harbour sleep."

The essay-writer of *Life in a Sick-room* comments on the sleepless nights when all old pains, all past moral sufferings, are renewed and magnified—every old sin and folly, and even the most trifling error, rising up anew; for "every sort of ghost is more easily laid than this kind." In the Dedication of that book to an ailing friend, Miss Martineau writes: "In our wakeful night seasons, when the healthy and the happy are asleep, we may call to each other from our retreats, to know each how the other fares; and whether we are at the moment dreary, or at peace, it may be that there are angels abroad (perhaps the messengers of our own sympathies), who may bear our mutual greetings, and drop them on their rounds." Often at least had this been the writer's fancy, when the images close about her were terrific enough; and when, in the very throng of these sleepless horrors, she had cast about for some charm or talisman wherewith to rid herself of them; and some voice of prayer would presently reach her from a temple on the furthest horizon of her life,—or some sweet or triumphant hymn of submission or praise would float to her spirit's ear from the far shores of her childhood.

Sir Benjamin Brodie professes in his *Psychological Inquiries* to have "not unfrequently derived an ample compensation for the wearisome hours of a sleepless night," from the practice of that reflective self-communing, uninterrupted by the remarks of others, which was impracticable during the busy, social day. Highly he prized the privileges of conversation, and collision of mind with mind; but to turn what we gain from conversation to the best account, there are intervals required, he said, in which our ideas may flow uninterruptedly, without being diverted in their course by what our companions have to say; and in such intervals we best learn to think. Not the worst of such intervals to him were the watches of the night. William Collins, the painter, during his stay at Iver, when night came, and the complication of his sufferings defied even the power of opiates to procure him sleep, found constant solace for the weary hours of darkness in drawing upon his memory for all the new impressions of natural scenery garnered there during the day, and from these visionary materials he would compose new pictures, arranging their colour, their light and shade, incident and detail, before his mind's eye, as he was used to arrange them on his canvas in happier days. By this occupation, as we read in his memoirs, he succeeded in robbing his wakeful hours of half their monotony and pain. Luther testifies, saying, "Oftentimes during the night when I cannot sleep, I endeavour to seek, when lying

on my bed, in what manner to bring the papists to repentance." Retrospect, less perhaps pure and simple than impure and compound, was Rousseau's resource against the pains of sleeplessness and against sleepless pain. "Quand mes douleurs me font tristement mesurer la longueur des nuits, et que l'agitation de la fièvre m'empêche de gouter un seul instant de sommeil, souvent je me distrais de mon état présent, en songeant aux divers événements de ma vie ; et les repentirs, les doux souvenirs, l'attendrissement, se partagent le soin de me faire oublier quelques moments mes souffrances." Suetonius relates of Caligula that he was extremely tormented for want of sleep, and that what short snatches of it he did get were made horrible by the bad dreams of a bad man, say in charity (and the sleeplessness is significant to that end), a mad man : the main part of each night was passed by him in disquiet, seeking rest and finding none ; sometimes sitting up in his bed ; by and by springing from it, and roaming from gallery to gallery and longing for day.

But here may be found a convenient point of transition to a fresh chapter of instances, illustrative of being, with or without reason, AFRAID IN THE DARK.

## XVI.

### *AFRAID IN THE DARK.*

THERE is such a thing as the pressure of darkness, Victor Hugo remarks, in his description of Gilliat sometimes waking in the night-time and peering into the darkness, and feeling a strange emotion, in a situation so dismal and disquieting as his. And to explain what is meant by this pressure of darkness, a paragraph follows of word-painting in the French word-painter's most forcible manner: a strange roof of shadow; a deep obscurity, which no diver can explore; a light mingled with that obscurity, of a strange, subdued, and sombre kind; floating atoms of rays, like a dust of seeds or of ashes; millions of lamps, but no illumining; a mysterious and abysmal depth; an enigma, at once showing and concealing its face; the Infinite in its mask of darkness;—these are called the synonyms of night, whose “weight lies heavily on the soul of man.” And the pressure of darkness is said to act in inverse proportion upon different kinds of natures. In the presence of night, “man feels his own incompleteness”—he perceives the dark void and is sensible of infirmity: it is like the vacancy of blindness. “Face to face with night, man bends, kneels, prostrates, himself, crouches on the earth, crawls towards

a cave, or seeks for wings. Almost always he shrinks from that vague presence of the Infinite Unknown." The saying of Euripides, that when it is dark the coward is mighty brave,

*Ἐν δρόμῳ δραπέτης μέγα σθένει,*

must be interpreted in a duly qualified sense. Braver men than Hudibras have passed through very much the same set of sensations as he did when he

"Lay still expecting worse and more,  
Stretch'd out at length upon the floor;  
And though he shut his eyes as fast  
As if t' had been to sleep his last,  
Saw all the shapes that fear or wizards  
Do make the devil wear for wizards."

*Ἐν νύκτι βουλή,* says the Greek proverb: in the night there is counsel. So the French, *La nuit porte conseil*. Their reference may be to what we express by the phrase, "I'll sleep upon it." But that tends to shift the decision till next morning. Night is the time for thinking, whether we will or not. Dr. Croly, in *Salathiel*, speaks of night as cooling the brain, fevered by the bustle of the day, and reminding our forgetful nature, by a perpetual semblance, of the hour when all things must pass away, and be silent, and sleep; and as the time to sit in judgment on our hearts, and by a decision which no hypocrisy can disguise, anticipate the punishment of the wicked, as it gives the good man the foretaste of bliss. Mr.

Coventry Patmore is eloquent upon the "sense like fear that springs—

"At night when we are conscious of our distance from the strife  
Of cities, and the memory of the spirit in all things rife  
Endows the silence round us with a grim and ghastly life."

And elsewhere he gives utterance to the feeling,—

"How strange at night to wake and watch, while others sleep,  
Till sight and hearing ache for objects that may keep  
The awful inner sense unroused, lest it should mark  
The life that haunts the emptiness and horror of the dark!"

So again is De Quincey eloquent upon what one is apt to feel when sleeping alone, utterly divided from all call or hearing of friends, nothing around one but frail curtains, and a world of illimitable night, whisperings at a distance, correspondence going on between darkness and darkness, like one deep calling to another, and the dreamer's own heart the centre from which the whole net-work of this unimaginable chaos radiates, by means of which the blank "privations" of silence and darkness become powers the most "positive" and awful. Cowper writes to Hayley in 1792 about his nightly sufferings from terrors that "would appear ridiculous to most, but to you they will not, for you are a reasonable creature, and know well that to whatever cause it be owing (whether to constitution or to God's express appointment), I am hunted by spiritual hounds in the night season. I cannot help it. You will pity me, and wish it were otherwise; and though you may think there is much

of the imaginary in it, will not deem it for that reason an evil less to be lamented." We have Boswell confessing (*habemus confitentem*) to his friend Temple, in 1775, "I awake in the night dreading annihilation, or being thrown into some horrible state of being." Like the correspondent confessor in Rousseau: "Je me trouve dans mon lit, accablé de fatigue, et trempé de sueur et de larmes. . . . Je me mets à errer par la chambre, effrayé comme un enfant des ombres de la nuit, croyant me voir environné de fantômes. . . . Mon effroi redouble et m'ôte le jugement."

A modern poem shows us Licinius, rising in the restless night, and musing by the altars of his gods, when over all his spirit a supernatural gloom had fallen, and "that profound discouragement which seizes on the soul whose passion, spent in stormy thought, leaves action half unnerved.

" — Dead-cold influences pass'd  
About the old man's heart. Licinius cast  
His body upon the ground, and felt a Fear  
Plant its foot on him in the darkness drear,  
And pray'd intensely, as men only pray  
When Fear is on them."

Plutarch tells us of Marius, now a septuagenarian, that revolving the miseries, the flights, the dangers he had experienced both by land and sea, his inquietude spoiled his rest, and a voice seemed continually to be pronouncing words of menace in his ear. Hence, unable to support the painfulness of watching, his

recourse to the bottle, and to those excesses which so ill became his years. Suetonius records of Cæsar that he was disturbed in his latter years by nocturnal terrors. Rienzi, in an extant letter, describes the prostration of mind under which he suffered just when his power was seemingly fixed on the most solid foundation. A sudden timidity, he says, came over him so frequently, that he awoke at night, and cried out that the armed enemy was entering into his palace. He was perturbed by an owl that settled on a pinnacle of it, and which, though constantly scared away by his servants as constantly flew back, and for twelve nights kept him without sleep by its dismal hootings. "And thus he whom the fury of the Roman nobles and the array of his armed foes could not alarm, lay shuddering at visions and the scream of night-birds." And he avows that, weakened by want of sleep, and these perpetual terrors, he was no longer fit to bear arms or give audience to the people. Vain was every effort to shake off the depressing influence, to escape the cold shade, of those *umbræ nocturnæ*, which, as George Buchanan phrases it, *quietem terrificis agitant figuris*.

An enthusiastic yachtsman confesses to the frequency with which he wakes at sea in the deep of the dead night, and feels with a chill sense of terror that there is only a fir-plank between him and the mysterious creatures of the deep who follow in the wake of the ship, and, with cruel stony eyes, wait for its

tenants outside,—the water all the while whistling, and whispering, and splashing, and gurgling restlessly on the other side of the thin board which keeps the ocean out of his crib. The most hardy and well-seasoned adventurers are sometimes the victims of acute forms of night terrors. Mungo Park told Sir Walter Scott of his being apt to awake suddenly in the night, from a nervous disorder which troubled him, and whenever he did so it was with the impression that he was still a prisoner in Africa. Adventurers had need, however, to be free from susceptibility to those strange noises for which Dr. O. W. Holmes declares night, anywhere, to be “an awful time.” To lie awake listening for sounds will easily make almost any man nervous. Just keep your ears open any time after midnight, suggests the doctor, when you are lying in bed in a lone attic of a dark night, and what strange, horrid, unaccountable noises you will hear! The “stillness” of night he scouts as a vulgar error: all the dead things seem alive. The old chest of drawers goes “crack!” by night, that you never hear crack in the daytime. There’s the creak of a door ajar, which you are certain you shut. A sudden gust rattles all the windows, though there does not seem to be any wind about that it belongs to; and when it stops, you hear the worms boring in the powdery beams overhead; and so on, and so on, till “you are damp and cold, and sitting bolt upright, and the bed trembling so

that the death-watch is frightened and has stopped ticking!"

Johnson's Abyssinian sage likens himself, in one of his discourses with Imlac, to a man habitually afraid of spectres, who is set at ease by a lamp, and wonders at the dread which harassed him in the dark ; yet, if his lamp be extinguished, feels again the terrors which he knows that when it is light he shall feel no more. In Edgar Huntly's morbid experience, famine and blindness and savage enemies and death never fail to be conjured up by the silence and darkness of the night ; these he cannot dissipate by any efforts of reason : his avowed cowardice requires the perpetual consolation of light ; his heart droops when he marks the decline of the sun, and he never sleeps but with a candle burning at his pillow. "If, by any chance, I should awake and find myself immersed in darkness, I know not what act of desperation I might be suddenly impelled to commit." As with the remorseful Ethwald, in Miss Baillie's tragedy, one scene of which opens with the lighting up of a royal apartment by two servants, who are commanded to bring the light to noon-day pitch : "It is a fearful time," says one of them ; "no marvel Ethwald should not love the dark in which his fancy shapes all fearful things,"—while the other scouts the notion of these things being shaped by fancy. When Ethwald himself comes in, and orders lights, and a groom of the chambers ventures on the "methinks" a hundred

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lamps would scarce suffice to brighten up so spacious a room,—“Then let a thousand do it,” his master exclaims; but a thousand will *not* do it, in his case, any more than all the perfumes of Arabia would cleanse of blood stains Lady Macbeth’s little hand. It is the doom of Milton’s fallen archangel that darkness visible serves only to discover sights of woe. To Milton’s fallen man, the dreadful gloom of “black air,” represented all things with double terror to his now evil conscience.

More hard to bear, says Miss Thackeray, even than the troubles, the pains, the aches, the longings of life, are its blanks and its wants. “Outer darkness, with the tormenting fires and the companion devils, is not the outer darkness that has overwhelmed most hearts with terror and apprehension.” No words, no response, silence, abandonment—to us weak, loving, longing human creatures, that, as she says, is the worst fate of all. Not merely in the dark, in a darkness that may be felt; but alone in the dark, a loneliness to be felt more feelingly still. Total eclipse of light, and absolute negation of sympathy, absolute privation of fellowship with one’s kind, of companionship with a congenial spirit or responsive flesh and blood. To quote from another of Joanna Baillie’s Plays on the Passions—that of fear: the entrance of Cathrina is welcomed with transports of relief by affrighted Orra, the typical victim of that passion:

*"Orra (embracing her).* How kind ! such blessed kindness keep  
thee by me ;  
I'll hold thee fast ; an angel brought thee hither.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Cath.* — Fear not now,

I will not leave thee till the break of day.

*Orra.* Heaven bless thee for it ! Till the break of day !  
The very thought of daybreak gives me life.  
If but this night were past," etc.

Who, asks Canon Kingsley, has not known in the still, sleepless hours of night, how dark thoughts will possess the mind with terrors, which seem logical, irrefragable, inevitable ? Kant used to laugh with stoical contempt by day at the shadow illusions which appalled him by night ; and to fortify his own resolution to contend against them, he wrote down in his memorandum-book, "No surrender now to panics of darkness." Up to the time of his failing health in advanced age, darkness and utter silence had been the two pillars on which his sleep rested—no step must approach his room, no ray of light penetrate his shutters ; but now darkness was a terror to him, and silence an oppression. A nightly companion became indispensable ; for at seven in the evening came on duly a period of great distress, which lasted till five or six in the morning—sometimes later ; and Kant continued through the night alternately to walk about and lie down, occasionally tranquil, but more often in great agitation, especially after snatches of slumber, from which he was almost invariably roused by phan-

tasmata or terrific dreams. Banquo's prayer to the "merciful powers," when, after the stroke of twelve, a heavy summons lies like lead upon him, and yet he would not sleep, is,—

"Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature  
Gives way to in repose!"

When the Man of Uz said, and hoped, his bed would comfort him, and his couch ease his complaint, then his Maker scared him with dreams, and terrified him through visions, so that his soul chose strangling, and death rather than life, such a life as that. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon him, and trembling, which made all his bones to shake, and as a spirit passed before his face, the hair of his flesh stood up. As in that latter-day poem in which the Lady's white face turned a thought whiter, when,

"—— on a sudden, from far, a fear  
Through all her heart its horror drew,  
As of something awful growing near.  
Cold fingers seem'd roaming through her damp hair.  
Her lips were lock'd. The power of prayer  
Left her. She dared not turn."

Referring to the collect beginning "Lighten our darkness," Mr. de Quincey avows the profound impression this special prayer against the perils of darkness had from childhood wrought upon him—an effect greatly deepened by "the symbolic treatment which this liturgy gives to this darkness and to these perils"—the marvellous magnetism of Christianity

calling up from darkness sentiments the most august, previously inconceivable, formless, and without life ; for previously, he alleges, there had been no religious philosophy equal to the task of ripening such sentiments,—the incarnation of which sentiments in images of corresponding grandeur has so exalted their character as to lodge them eternally in human hearts.

“Me,” says the Abbess Irmingard, in the *Golden Legend*, when she bids Elsie go to sleep,—

“Me so many cares encumber,  
So many ghosts, and forms of fright,  
Have started from their graves to-night,  
They have driven sleep from my eyes away.”

Edgar Allan Poe’s narrative of the Tell-tale Heart makes much of the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe—a sound the narrator hears from the bed of the old man he is stealthily watching, and one that he claims to know all too well himself; for many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from his own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted him. “I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him. . . . I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself—‘It is nothing but the wind in the chimney—it’s only a

mouse crossing the floor.' . . . He had been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions ; but he had found all in vain. All in vain ; because Death, in approaching him, had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim." David Hartley, in his *Theory of the Human Mind*, comments on the gleam of pleasure he assumes every person to feel the moment that light is introduced into a dark room, and upon the disagreeable sensations tending to melancholy and sometimes verging towards the borders of terror, on passing suddenly from a light into a perfectly dark place. Given a weak brain, and the transition, however gradual or partial, becomes fraught with distress ; the borders of terror are passed. Charles the Second of Spain would not retire to rest, except with his confessor and two friars, who had to lie by his side during the night. Of Mr. Carlyle's Friedrich Wilhelm in November, 1730, an extant despatch records, "The King of Prussia cannot sleep : the officers sit up with him every night,"—his talk mainly made up of spirits and apparitions ; much as that of Spain's un-merry monarch, the Second Charles, was of demons and hobgoblins. Our George the Second, after the death of Queen Caroline, required one of his pages regularly to be in his room by night : "I take this," Lord Hervey says, "(with great deference to his magnanimity on other occasions) to have been the result of the same way of thinking that makes

many weak minds fancy themselves more secure from any supernatural danger in the light than in the dark, and in company than alone." Rousseau flatly denies that either reason, learning, intellect, or courage, or all combined, can avail in all cases to deliver men from fears in the dark. "J'ai vu des raisonneurs, des esprits forts, des philosophes, des militaires intrépides en plein jour, trembler la nuit comme des femmes au bruit d'une feuille d'arbre." Hobbes used to say that he of all men was bound to laugh at such fancies, but that habit and his nurse had been too much for him. His valiant contemporary, the Earl of Sandwich, could never outgrow his apprehensions and misgivings of a certain dark staircase at home. James Thomson, while a student at the University of Edinburgh, had so profound a dread of supernatural appearances, that he could not bear to be left alone in the dark; and there is a story of one of his fellow-students, who slept in the same room with him, stealing out one night while he was asleep, to enjoy the outburst of his terrors when he should awaken, and find himself in the dark without his usual companion. The effect is described by one of the poet's biographers as both painful and ludicrous: "Thomson, on discovering his situation, roared like a child, and rushed out of the room to call up his landlady." It seems that as he advanced in life this infirmity wore out; nor is a trace of it discoverable in his poems. Washington Irving is an

instance of the same kind of infirmity—though not in his case one of abject terror—not wearing out with advancing or very advanced years. At six-and-twenty he was, by his own account, the victim of a dismal horror that was continually in his mind, and that made him fear to be alone. “I had often to get up in the night, and seek the bedroom of my brother, as if the having a human being by me would relieve me from the frightful gloom of my own thoughts.” This was soon after the death of Matilda Hoffman. At seventy-five we find him “horror-haunted” by night, and securing the presence of nephew and doctor by turns, to relieve one another and *him*. Here is an extract from his nephew’s diary, of Jan. 24, 1859: “Evening.—Turning to me, at half-past ten, ‘You’ll be near me to-night?’ ‘Certainly.’ ‘I begin to feel, as bedtime approaches, the old dread of my own room and the night.’ . . . [Then, to the cheery remonstrance of one of his nieces] ‘I know it, my dear; but there is no arguing with these things. They are uncontrollable. They come and go like the wind. When you are all about me here, I can sleep quietly; but when I get to my own room, and you are all gone, and I think all are asleep but myself, then comes over me this strange dread again. You recollect [turning to his nephew] the scene among the tombs in *The Mourning Bride*—

‘Give me thy hand, and let me hear thy voice;  
Nay, quickly speak to me, and let me hear  
Thy voice. My own affrights me with its echoes.’”

Nothing, we are told, could exceed the expressive manner in which he repeated this appeal of Almeria to Leonora, in that passage of Congreve's tragedy to which Dr. Johnson gave such high, and, Shakspeare's scholars think, such extravagant praise. A month later the diary refers to Mr. Irving as scarcely able to summon resolution to go to his "haunted chamber," as he termed his bedroom, from the brooding phantoms that, like Poe's Raven, seemed perched above the door. "When I entered it, at eleven, to take my station on a sofa for the night, I found he was shunning his bed, and pacing up and down the room with great restlessness. He begged me not to leave the room, but to 'stick by' him; it was a great comfort 'to know I was there.' [In the summer of that year, after he had been away from home, he is described as retiring at bedtime to his room alone, as he had done for some nights past. The door being open and Mr. Pierre Irving perceiving in the night that his uncle was restless, he went in, and his coming was duly welcomed as "quite a reprieve." And the old man said to the young one next day, "I shall have to get you to mount guard again to-night. I am ashamed to ask it, but you cannot conceive what an abject coward this nervousness makes of me." On a later occasion he said he knew his companion's presence could not help him, but there was a forlorn comfort in having some one to groan to: "You can only lie down in the gutter with me,"—referring to the story

of the sot who said to a brother sot in the gutter, that he could not help him up, but would lie down beside him.

Thomas Hood wrote from abroad, in the absence of his wife, and under the pressure of disease: "I have little Tom for a bedfellow till Jane returns; only the sick, and sleepless, and spiritless can know the comfort, the blessing of a familiar voice in the long dreary night."

One of the convicted felons upon whose experience Mr. Henry Mayhew drew for his *London Labour and the London Poor*, confessed, "The only thing that frightens me when I'm in prison is sleeping in a cell by myself—because I think things may appear." Mr. Reade makes much of this sort of experience in his best known work of fiction, or matter-of-fact romance, where he describes the darkness in which Robinson lay in his cell as not like the darkness of our bedrooms at night, in which the outlines of objects are more or less visible; it was the frightful darkness that chilled and crushed the Egyptians, soul and body, he says; which terrible and unnatural privation of all light, if very trying to all God's creatures, is to none more so than to man, and amongst men it is most dangerous and distressing to those who have imagination and excitability. Mr. Shadworth Hodgson, in his ethical inquiry entitled *The Theory of Practice*, discusses under the term "Eeriness" that peculiar emotion of awe or dread which

makes the night-fears of children, and at times of older people also, and from which he deems even animals to be not exempt. But ignoring the animals, he propounds religious feeling as the special antidote to the pain of eeriness ; an antidote which, as he says, combats the shadowy terror with weapons more subtle and penetrating than its own—namely, with the sense of repose beneath the protection of Almighty God, from Whom no secrets are hid.

## XVII.

### *CHILDREN IN THE DARK.*

**I**N arguing that we are not at home with God, or in God, in this present life of ours, the late Mr. Frederick Robertson appealed for demonstration to the fact that in our very childhood we are not at home with that other world of God's. An infant fears, he said, to be alone, because he feels he is not alone: he trembles in the dark, because he is conscious of the presence of the world of spirits. "Long before he has been told tales of terror, there is an instinctive dread of the supernatural in the infant mind. It is the instinct which we have from childhood that gives us the feeling of another world." Close students of psychology may take exception to the preacher's inference; but the extremely early manifestation of a terror of darkness, as such, is at least noteworthy and suggestive. How sensibly the terror may be aggravated by tales of the supernatural, if it is not due to them, every observer will have noticed. Like Crabbe's learned boy, in his very little-boyhood, as managed by the well-meaning dame, his grandam:

"On powers unseen, the good and ill, she dwelt,  
And the poor Boy mysterious terrors felt;  
From frightful dreams he waking sobb'd in dread,  
Till the good Lady came to guard his bed."

Coleridge speaks of himself when a child, in his *Biographia Literaria*, as haunted by spectres whenever he was in the dark. He used to pray nightly the old prayer to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, to bless the bed that he lay on, and most firmly he believed in the truth and efficacy of it: "Frequently have I (half-awake and half-asleep; my body dis-eased, and fevered by my imagination), seen armies of ugly things bursting in upon me, and these four Angels keeping them off." The obstinacy of the Count of Chateaubriand in putting a child to sleep alone at the top of a turret, in a chateau teeming with traditions of robbers and spectres, might, observes his son—once the child in question—have produced unpleasant consequences; but the latter declares it to have turned out to his advantage. This harsh mode of treatment, he assures us, left him the courage of a man, without depriving him of that sensibility of imagination, the careful exclusion of which from the youthful mind he lamented in modern systems. His father, instead of endeavouring to convince him that there were no such things as ghosts, forced him to brave them. And while Chateaubriand's mother and sister lay down nightly on their couches, by his account "almost expiring with fear," he got to be so superior to it, that the winds of midnight, howling through the uninhabited turret, served only as playthings to his imagination, and lent wings to his dreams. With all his supersensitive-

ness and nervous excitability, he claims a dignified, almost robust immunity from childish night-fears ; from such agitations as Mrs. Browning vividly depicts, where she describes one that wakes up shrieking,—

“As a child that wakes at night  
From a dream of sisters speaking  
In a garden’s summer-light,—  
That wakes, starting up and bounding,  
In a lonely, lonely bed,  
With a wall of darkness round him,  
Stifling black about his head !”

Margaret Fuller Ossoli describes herself in early girlhood as by night a victim of spectral illusions and nightmare—which induced continual headache, weakness, and nervous affections of all kinds. She was often sent to bed several hours too late, with nerves unnaturally stimulated by her father’s system of recitations ; and no one, it seems, knew why this child, already kept up so late, was still unwilling to retire. Her aunts cried out upon the spoilt child ; they were not aware that, as soon as the light was taken away, she seemed to see colossal faces advancing slowly towards her, the eyes dilating, and each feature swelling loathsome as they came, till, when they were about to close in upon her, she started up with a shriek, which drove them away, but only to return when she lay down again. “No wonder the child arose and walked in her sleep, roaming all over the house, till once, when they heard her, they came

and waked her, and she told what she had dreamed [of the trees in Virgil that dripped with blood, a pool of which kept rising higher and higher till it nearly touched her lips], her father sharply bid her 'leave off thinking of such nonsense, or she would be crazy,' never knowing that he himself was the cause of all these horrors of the night." Mr. Dickens held it to be difficult to overstate the intensity and accuracy of an intelligent child's observation; and if a fixed impression be once formed of an object terrible to the child, it will be (for want of reasoning upon) inseparable from great fear. "Force the child at such a time, be Spartan with it, send it into the dark against its will, leave it in a lonely bedroom against its will, and you had better murder it." Wayward and froward make rather hard lines for the child those in Spenser's similitude:

"Like as a wayward childe, whose sounder sleepe  
Is broken with some fearful dreame's affright,  
With froward will doth set himself to weepe,  
Ne can be still'd for all his nurse's might,  
But kicks and squalls and shrieks for fell despight."

Lucretius has a comparison, *veluti pueri trepidant, atque omnia cecis In tenebris metuunt*. The gloom of night ("deadly night," as Homer terms it), more universally perhaps than any other phenomenon, first awakens an uneasy sense of vastness, remarks Professor Newman, who refers to the young child accustomed to survey the narrow limits of a lighted room,

who waking in the night is frightened at the dim vacancy. "No nurse's tales about spectres are needed to make the darkness awful."\* Nor is it allowed to be from fear of any human or material enemy: "it is the negation, the unknown, the unlimited, which excites and alarms; and sometimes the more, if mingled with glimpses of light," Apply Wordsworth's lines :

"——But after I had seen  
That spectacle, for many days, my brain  
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense  
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts  
There hung a darkness, call it solitude  
Of blank desertion. No familiar shapes  
Remained . . .  
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live  
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind  
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams."

Leigh Hunt makes signal record in his memoirs, of the afflictions his childhood endured, on the night-side of nature, from an elder brother whom he had unfortunately allowed to discover his dread of being in the dark, and his horror of dreadful faces, even in books. The brother played him repeated tricks with one "frightful anomaly" of this kind—the portrait of

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\* Rousseau had written long before to the same effect. "On attribue cet effroi aux contes des nourrices : on se trompe ; il a une cause naturelle. Quelle est cette cause? La même qui rend les sourds défiants et le peuple superstitieux, l'ignorance des choses qui nous environnent, et de ce qui se passe autour de nous."—*Emile*, livre ii.

a fabulous wild-beast, in some picture book, called the Mantichora, which inexpressibly shocked and distressed the smaller boy, who, be the tricks ever so frequent and palpable, was "always ready to be frightened again." He dwells the more, as an auto-biographer, on this "seemingly petty circumstance," because such things, he rightly enough contends, are no petty ones to a sensitive child. "My brother had no idea of the mischief they did me. Perhaps the mention of them will save mischief to others. They helped to morbidize all that was weak in my temperament, and cost me many a bitter night." When he went to Christ Hospital, the old night-fears were gradually overcome, sleeping as he there had to do with some sixty boys in the room: "no Mantichoras there—no old men crawling on the floor." But his subsequent visit to Merton, else such a happy one, had this experience of chagrin to damp and mortify him, that on sleeping alone, after so long a period, he found his terror come back again—not indeed in all the same shapes, but he was at the mercy of any other ghostly fiction that presented itself to his mind. He struggled hard to say nothing about it; but his days began to be discoloured with fears of his nights; and "with unutterable humiliation" he begged that the footman might be allowed to sleep in the same room. "I was pitied for my fears, but praised for my candour. . . . Samuel, who, fortunately for my shame, had a great respect for fears of this kind, had

his bed removed accordingly into my room ; . . . and in a few days I was reassured and happy." That the old man, turned autobiographer, had outlived the terrors of lonely nights, if indeed he had not altogether come to dread the grave as little as his bed, may be gathered from one of the closing pages of his book, where speaking of himself as newly a widower, and wondering how he could talk of these things as calmly as he did, he adds : "But I am in my seventy-fifth year, . . . and when I go to bed, and lie awhile on my back before turning to sleep, I often seem to be rehearsing, not without complacency or something better, the companionship of the grave." In his *Memoirs of Sir Ralph Esher* he had exemplified in little Philip Herne the usual dread evinced by children, of the dark and its mysteries, but here developed in excess : "If a candle went out, he came and stood by his mother's side, holding her gown, and trembling from head to foot. He could not be left an instant in a room alone without running and screaming after the deserting person ;" and the author implicitly denounces the tactics of those who by aggravating and playing with these fears, "foolishly pretended, perhaps imagined," that this was the way to render the child sensible of the absurdity, and grow more of a man. Elia, though no parent, was free to tell parents that they know not what they do when they leave young children alone to go to sleep in the dark ; do not

realize what a terrible shaking it is to the poor nerves of their little ones—the feeling about for a friendly arm, the hoping for a familiar voice, when they wake screaming, and find none to soothe them. He was satisfied that, in the medical point of view, the keeping them up till midnight would prove the better caution. It is not book, or picture, or the stories of foolish servants, he maintained, which create these terrors in children ; they can at most but give them a direction. In his essay on Witches and other Night Fears, Lamb cited the case of “dear little T. H.”—initials easily recognizable in contemporary literature,—who of all children had been brought up with the most scrupulous exclusion of every taint of superstition—never having been allowed to hear of goblin or apparition, scarcely to be told of bad men, or to hear of or read any distressing story,—who nevertheless found all this world of fear, from which he had been so rigidly excluded *ab extra*, in his own “thick-coming fancies,” so that from his little midnight pillow, this “nurse-child of optimism will start at shapes, unborrowed of tradition, in sweats to which the reveries of cell-damned murderer are tranquillity.” In his essay, too, on Christ Hospital, Lamb piteously pleaded and protested against the fancy of dungeons for children, “that sprout of Howard’s brain,” for which (saving the reverence due to Holy Paul) the essayist could willingly spit upon the philanthropist’s statue—little, square, Bedlam

cells, with a peep of light, let in askance, from a prison-orifice at top, where the poor black-booked Blue-coat boy was shut up by himself of nights out of the reach of any sound, to suffer whatever horrors the weak nerves, and superstition incident to his time of life, might subject him to. But "one or two instances of lunacy, or attempted suicide, at length convinced the governors of the impolicy of this part of the sentence, and the midnight torture to the spirits was dispensed with." An American author urges the very little we know of the power there is in outward sights and sounds and habitudes to hold us safely by their myriad fine and subtle threads, in mental poise; and goes on to argue that it is from an instinct of the spirit which touches upon this truth, rather than from any definite apprehension, that children of fine, sensitive, nervous organization dread "the dark." To thrust them relentlessly into this void they shrink from, is declared to be "an outrage and a cruelty,"—so deep is the soul's craving for things sensible and local, whereto to anchor itself. Mrs. Jameson has impressively recorded her childhood's fear of darkness and supernatural influences. As long as she could remember anything, she remembered these horrors of her infancy—how awakened she knew not. She had heard other children ridiculed for such fears, and held her peace. At first these haunting, thrilling, stifling terrors were vague; afterwards the form varied—one of the most per-

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manent being the ghost in Hamlet, which for three years followed her up and down the dark staircase, or stood by her bed, and which only the blessed light had power to exorcise. In daylight she was not only, by her own account, fearless, but audacious, inclined to defy all power and brave all danger—that is, all danger she could see. “In the ghastly night I never prayed; terror stifled prayer. These visionary sufferings, in some form or other, pursued me till I was nearly twelve years old. If I had not possessed a strong constitution and a strong understanding, which rejected and contemned my own fears, even while they shook me, I had been destroyed. How much weaker children suffer in this way, I have since known.” Sir Samuel Romilly mentions in his autobiography the terrors he suffered in earliest infancy from phantasmal illusions; and even when writing those remembrances he frankly avowed that the old fears and fancies were sometimes still very unwelcome intruders upon his thoughts. To John Foster, as a child, the time of going to bed was an awful season of each day. Mrs. Schimmelpenninck, after having the story of Apollyon and Giant Despair read to her from Bunyan, while very young, had such fearful visions and terror *post hoc nec non propter hoc* that it “nearly cost me my life,” she says. Her mother’s plan to counteract her nervous timidity, and to prove that her fears were groundless, was to send her in the dark to find something she might want; and the

child used to rush along the passages and lobbies of the old house, expecting to see some ghastly face peep out from behind one of the many doors.

The Man of Fancy in the *Mosses from an Old Manse* could not shut out from the walls of his castle in the air an uninvited multitude of shapes, among which figured those forms of dim terror, which had beset him at the entrance of life, waging warfare with his hopes, and strange uglinesses of earlier date, such as haunt children in the night time. These now glided among the pillars of his magnificent saloon, grinning recognition, until the man shuddered anew at the forgotten terrors of his childhood. Happy that they had been forgotten, so far; to many the very means adopted by injudicious elders to stamp out "such nonsense," tending to stamp them *into* the perturbed spirit.

When it was bedtime at Mrs. Pipchin's, as little Miss Paukey was afraid of sleeping alone in the dark, Mrs. Pipchin always made a point of driving that little body upstairs herself, like a sheep; and it was cheerful, we are told, to hear Miss Paukey moaning long afterwards, in the least eligible chamber, and Mrs. Pipchin now and then going in to shake her. The chapter of Tina's adoption, in *Oldtown Folks*, closes with kindly Miss Mehitable bidding good-night to her new little charge, who has escaped from such ugly quarters into such pleasant ones—from very

“hard lines” indeed to where the lines are fallen in pleasant places, and promise the child a goodly heritage; and “I will leave you a candle,” added the mistress of the house, “because this is a strange place,”—promising, at the same time, not to be long in coming to bed herself.—“How good you are,” says Tina. “I used to be so afraid in the dark at Miss Asphyxia’s; and I was so wicked all day, that I was afraid of God too, at night. I used sometimes to think I heard something chewing under my bed; and I thought it was a wolf, and would eat me up.” It is easy, writes Mrs. Craik, to laugh at children’s fancies about “ghosts” and “bogie;” but Dante’s terrors in the haunted wood were not greater, we are assured, “than poor little Olive’s,” in the tale bearing that heroine’s name, “when she stood at the entrance of the long gallery, dimly peopled with the fantastic shadows of dawn.” None but those who remember the fearful imaginings of their childhood, are admitted to be capable of comprehending the “self-martyrdom, the heroic daring, which dwelt in that little trembling bosom, as Olive groped across the gloom.” For once a heroine is distinctively heroic; and quite a small heroine too; not yet come to years of discretion, yet endowed with valour as if the better part of it.

## XVIII.

### *WAKING AND WEEPING.*

**A**S night is the time for rest, and, as James Montgomery in successive stanzas affirms, the time for dreams, the time for toil even (in ploughing the classic field, intent on finding buried spoil there), the time to watch, the time to muse, the time to pray, the time for care, and the time for death ; so, on his showing,

"Night is the time to weep ;  
To wet with unseen tears  
Those graves of memory where sleep  
The joys of other years ;  
Hopes that were angels in their birth,  
But perished young like things on earth."

Henry Mackenzie's Harriet, in the *Man of the World*, is a typical young person as regards the lachrymose susceptibilities and potentialities ; "she would often weep all night from some tale which her maid had told of fictitious disaster." So is Miss Austen's Marianne the representation of sensibility, as her sister Elinor is of sense : "Marianne would have thought herself very inexcusable had she been able to sleep at all the first night after parting from Willoughby." She would have been ashamed to look her family in the face the next morning, had she not risen from her bed in more need of repose than

when she lay down in it. "She was awake the whole night, and she wept the greatest part of it,"—and as she got up with a headache, was unable to talk, and unwilling to take any nourishment; giving pain to her mother and sister, and forbidding all attempt at consolation from either, her sensibility is proved to have been potent enough.

"Wer nicht die kummervollen Nächte  
Auf seinem Bette weinend sass,  
Der kennt euch nicht, ihr himmlischen Mächte."

Who never spent the darksome hours weeping and watching for the morrow, he knows you not, ye unseen Powers. Burns has a stanza to the purpose, so far as regards the affinity of night and weeping :

"Ye whom sorrow never wounded,  
Ye who never shed a tear,  
Care-untroubled, joy-surrounded,  
Gaudy day to you is dear."

Byron's hero, retiring to rest, found willows, instead of poppies, waving over his couch :

"——He meditated, fond  
Of those sweet bitter thoughts which banish sleep,  
And make the worldling sneer, the youngling weep."

As in Horace, *Noctes non sine multis Insomnis lacrymis agit*. The Psalmist declares his tears to have been his meat day and *night*. "Every night wash I my bed, and water my couch with my tears." The solitary city impersonated in the *Lamentations*, become a widow, "weepeth sore in the night, and her

tears are on her cheeks." Like the forsaken woman piteously depicted by Wordsworth, whose tale is

"——I have slept  
Weeping, and weeping have I waked ; my tears  
Have flowed as if my body were not such  
As others are ; and I could never die."

Aurora Leigh is upbraidingly told, "God never hears your voice excepting when you lie upon the bed at nights and weep." But some feelings and modes of sensibility there are, as Gerald Griffin said, which, amiable as they may be in themselves, ought to be avoided, repressed, and even "repelled with as much vigilance as vice itself." He owns to having once thought it a harmless thing to turn his eyes on past times, and deliver himself up, after dark, to the memory of his younger hours, of summer days departed, of faces fled or changed, of hearts made cold by death or by the world, that once beat fervently beside our own. But he had learnt to think more vigorously: he was young then, and fond; and now he shunned those feelings as he would crime. "They are the fancies that make our natures effeminate and weak, that unfit us for our duty to heaven and to our fellow creatures, and render us in soul what the sensualist is in frame." Dr. Beattie tells how in his younger days he used to devour Young's *Night Thoughts* with the same gratification as he then found in walking alone in a churchyard at midnight. "But qualms, and weakened nerves,

and depression of spirits," he found to be the damaging outcome of this sort of thing ; and years that brought the philosophic mind, also carried away, to his advantage, some of this perilous stuff that weighs about the heart, and clogs up the air-passages. There was a time in Southey's life—it was that of his fervid youth—when he declared that they

"Who know not what it is sometimes to wake  
And weep at midnight, are but instruments  
Of Nature's common work."

But readers of his large correspondence, none too large, will have noted how different a strain he uses in middle life, and afterwards, and how diligently he strove to drive away remembrances that *would* get the better of him in his dreams, but which he refused to entertain, as of old, in his bed waking. He came to see and to say that there is the same excuse for drunkenness and debauchery as for over-sensibility. And so he made a point of carrying Epictetus in his pocket, till his very heart was ingrained with it, "as a pig's bones become red by feeding upon madder." "I am now as practical a suppressor of all such indulgences of feeling, as if I were a quaker in form as well as in fact." Acquainted with grief he had been, and more intimately was to be ; sorrows, and severe ones, he had had, and severer ones were yet in store for him ; but this grief and these sorrows were too real to be cherished for

their own sake, or to be wooingly and winningly renewed every night, so as to seem and to be new every morning.

Referring to some gloomy lines of Shelley's, the late F. W. Robertson writes to a friend, that positively he will no longer walk with any one in those tenebrous avenues of cypress and yew. He likes sunny rooms, he avows, and sunny Truth. When he had more of spring and warmth he could afford to be prodigal of happiness; love the "darksome lawn brushed by the owlet's wing;" and meditate for hours over decay. But he now wanted sunlight and sunshine. He now desired to enter into those regions where cheerfulness and truth and health of mind and heart reside. What may heighten the attractions of such poetry as Hermann Ling's for German sentimentalists, or for very young readers, confessedly mars their success with those more manly natures, whose experience of the actual sorrow and cares of life makes them seek in poetry its more cheerful and sunny aspects. When we summon the singer to our feasts, they say, we do not relish the idea of his flinging a death's head on the table, by way of prelude to his song, and then drawing such "hearse-like airs" from his lyre as make the viands loathsome and the wine taste like poison. It is only, with Wordsworth they may sing or say,

"In youth we love the darksome lawn  
Brushed by the owlet's wing ;

Then, twilight is preferred to dawn,  
And autumn to the spring.  
Sad fancies do we then affect,  
In luxury of disrespect  
To our own prodigal excess  
Of too familiar happiness."

Middle-ageing Savillon begins to suspect that the sensibility of which young minds are proud, from which they look down with contempt on the unfeeling multitude of ordinary men, is less a blessing than an inconvenience. "Your mind, child," Julia de Roubigné is warned by her mother, "is too tender, I fear, for this bad world. You must learn to conquer some of its feelings, if you would be just to yourself; but I can pardon you, for I know how bewitching they are: but trust me, they must not be indulged too far; they poison the quiet of our lives." Agnes Grey, in the youngest Miss Brontë's story with that name, taking occasion to record her having given herself up, in all the bliss of solitude, to the "luxury of an unrestricted burst of weeping," hastens to add that this was a weakness she did not often indulge; her employments being too numerous, her leisure moments too precious, to admit of much time being given to fruitless lamentations. To cherish no ineffectual emotions was one of the characteristics of the Mère Angelique; as it is, indeed, contends a historian of the Port Royalists, of all powerful minds.

## XIX.

### *MIDNIGHT MUSINGS OF SELF-REPROACH.*

**I**N a well-known historical fiction there occurs a descriptive passage on the dull silent hours of the night, when not a sound stirs upon the heavy air to steal one thought from man's communion with his own dark heart—when the stern silence renders the sleep that covers all the world more like one universal death, and everything around us bids our conscience scan the brief records of our past existence, and prejudge us for the long eternity. And of his hero in that work, the author goes on to say that the time had been when, on a clear starry night, like the one in question, he would have gazed forth enchanted, and, without one heavy tie between his heart and the low earth, would have bade his spirit soar up in grand, calm dreams to heaven. “But now, how heavy was the night, how dark, how hopeless, how reproachful ! There was a voice even in the solemn stillness,” but no voice to plead his cause against the accusation of his own conscience. Wordsworth's apostrophe is right earnest—

“ O calm contented days, and peaceful nights !  
Who, when such good can be obtained, would strive  
To reconcile his manhood to a couch  
Soft, as may seem, but, under that disguise,  
Stuffed with the thorny substance of the past  
For fixed annoyance ;”

as well as full oft beset with floating dreams, black and disconsolate, the vapoury phantoms of futurity ? For, like a plague, as he elsewhere says of the remorseful man, will memory break out ; " and, in the blank and solitude of things, upon his spirit, with a fever's strength, will conscience prey." In his narrative poem of *Guilt and Sorrow*, the guilty man's midnight sufferings are thus indicated in a stanza near the end :

" His ears were never silent ; sleep forsook  
His burning eyelids stretched and stiff as lead ;  
All night from time to time beneath him shook  
The floor as he lay shuddering on his bed ;  
And oft he groaned aloud, ' O God, that I were dead ! ' "

A moral inquirer into the relative pain of bodily sufferings and of those which have their seat in the soul, is confident, in the case of the sick as well as otherwise suffering, that the peculiar misery of their condition—subjection to a besetting thought—must be owned to absorb all others :—whether the thought relate to any intellectual matter, or whether it be self-abasement and self-weariness at the perpetually-recurring apparition of sins, follies, trifling old misadventures and misbehaviour, the tormenting and weakening effects are much alike : " the cold horror at waking up to the thought in the middle of the night, knowing that we shall sleep no more," only merges in the misery of opening our eyes upon a new day, with the spell of the thought full upon us.

There is no aching, no shooting or throbbing pain of fibre or nerve that can, it is contended, compare in poignancy with the like of this. Lord Lytton objects to the connecting with the stillness of midnight the voice of conscience, for he thinks "we wrong that innocent hour," and that it is upon the terrible "next morning," when reason is wide awake, that remorse fastens its fangs, that the irretrievable Past rises before us like a spectre, and the churchyard of memory yields up its grisly dead: then, he says, is the witching hour when the foul fiend within us can least tempt, perhaps, but most torment. "At night we have one thing to hope for, one refuge to fly to—oblivion and sleep. But at morning, sleep is over, and we are called upon coldly to review, and re-act, and live again the waking bitterness of self-reproach." This, however, is assuming that oblivion and sleep will come when they are called for in the dead unhappy night; and the adjournment to next morning of the pains and penalties of self-reproach is probably counter to common experience, and would to many be welcome, if feasible. The Hermit of Clovernook deems him a happy man that can speak of his "peace-giving bed"—such a rack for the spirits may be found in goosedown, such an unavoidable self-confessional is bed. "You try to think of many things, but the spirit or demon of the bed sets up yourself before yourself—brings all your doings before the bar of your conscience, and what a set of scurvy gaol-

birds may be among them!" There they are, old co-mates, sworn acquaintance; and yet the world could not believe that, for a moment, you kept such company. Rousseau made confession in old age of the trouble one of the base actions of his youth was to him in the watches of the night: "Ce souvenir cruel me trouble quelquefois, et me boulverse au point de voir, dans mes insomnies, cette pauvre fille venir me reprocher mon crime comme s'il n'était commis que d'hier." Memorable in the *Idylls of the King* is that picture of Guinevere when

"—— Many a time for hours,  
Beside the placid breathings of the king,  
In the dead night, grim faces came and went  
Before her, or a vague spiritual fear—  
Like to some doubtful noise of creaking doors,  
Heard by the watcher in a haunted house,  
That keeps the rust of murder on the walls—  
Held her awake."

To Garcia's good-night and "good dreams, your grace," the apt answer of the duke, or his amended reading of the wish, is, "Good acts you mean. He who does ill, awake, and turns to night for lovely-painted shades,

"Is like a satyr grinning in a brook  
To find Narcissus' round and downy check."

Churchill himself could be grave with those hours of darkness for his theme when night "suspends this mortal coil, when memory wakes, when for our misdoings Conscience takes a deep revenge, when, by

Reflection led, she draws his curtains, and looks  
Comfort dead." For, in the time-tables of a later  
bard,

"Night is the time for care ;  
Brooding on hours misspent,  
To see the spectre of despair  
Come to our lonely tent ;  
Like Brutus, 'midst his slumbering host,  
Startled by Cæsar's stalwart ghost."

Then is it we think so poignantly on the contrast between what we are, and what we MIGHT HAVE BEEN. Theodore Hook, in taking stock of his "tolerably large and extremely agreeable" circle of acquaintance, whom many people less conversant than himself with the world would call friends, pens this *obiter scriptum* : "But still, the memory of past days, and the recollection of what I might have been, compared with what I am, makes me seek at certain times the charm and comfort of solitude." How about charm and comfort in the night-watches, when engrossed by such a topic ? Hartley Coleridge, whose was in some respects so sadly misused and abused, if not altogether wasted, a life, was frequent and earnest in his self-upbraidings on this score. He thus incidentally refers to Calne, for instance, where his first vacation, as an Oxford man, had been spent with his father : "Calne, a place I can never think of without a strong twitching of the eye, though I have long lost the comfort of tears. Alas, what was I then ! what might I have made myself !" On losing that father, in

1834, he wrote to his mother, expressing his grief that he had not, himself, like Kirke White, been called away in his youth ; that his beloved parents had not then closed his eyes, so that his death might have been the only sorrow he ever caused them ; and “that when they talked of me, they might weep tears of tender joy, thinking of what I might have been, and no painful thought of what I had been,” etc. Some years previously he had indited these among other melancholy stanzas, in his book of MS. miscellanies :

“ When I received this volume small,  
My years were barely seventeen ;  
When it was hoped I should be all  
Which once, alas ! I might have been.

“ And now my years are thirty-five,  
And every mother hopes her lamb,  
And every happy child alive  
May never be what now I am.”

On losing his mother, he addressed an endeared friend of hers and his, in a copy of verses instinct with the same spirit of regret and self-reproach—musing on what he might have been,

“ Had I sustained aright the awful weight  
And duty of my place and destiny.

\* \* \* \* \*

What can I say ? In truth 'tis very sad  
To show the drear November seed  
To one who saw the April flowers so glad.”

Sainte-Beuve calls that melancholy refrain, *Hélas !*

*nous aurions pu être!* the device of almost every existence. What thinking, feeling man, indeed, but has to say with the poet,—

“For all the baffled efforts to achieve  
The imperishable from the things that perish,  
For broken vows, and weaken’d will, I grieve,”—

the same poet that sings,—

“I might have been . . . how much, how much,  
I am not now, and shall not be !”

the same poet that elsewhere puts into the mouth of one of his *dramatis personæ* a reflection on

“The Might-have-been, which never can be now,  
The Must-be-now, which never could have been,  
Were’t not that knowledge ever comes too late,  
And all that’s good is, in this wretched world,  
Good missed.”

On the eve of his thirty-third birthday Byron entered in his diary an emphatic *Eheu! on the fugaces anni* as they lapsed ; “but I don’t regret them so much for what I have done,” he wrote, “as for what I *might* have done.” Carlyle says of Mirabeau, that well might he “weep,” thinking over how his life had been blasted, by himself, by others ; and was now so defaced and thunder-riven, no “glory” could make it whole again.

“Something?—Ay, something comes back to me.—Think! what I might have been . . . what?  
Almost, I fancy at times, what I meant to have been, and am not.”

Mrs. Southey (Caroline Bowles) has at midnight

*Idas!*

her regretful antitheses between the *esse* and the *posse*, or *potuisse*:

“Thoughts that are almost murmurs whisper low  
Stinging comparisons, suggestions sad,  
Of what I *am*, and what I *might have been*,”

the italicized words being of her own emphasizing in that lady-like type, epistolary and confidential. Not in such a life as hers, however, would there be any warrant for application of such a stanza as,—

“The spirit bowed her head in shame,  
When thinking o'er life's altered scene;  
Flashes of purity which came  
To tell her what she might have been.”

Barry Cornwall's stanzas on a vain regret contain at least two expressions of the preterpluperfect subjunctive:

“Oh, had I nursed, when I was young,  
The lessons of my father's tongue,  
(The deep laborious truths he drew  
From all he saw and others knew),  
I might have been—ah, me!  
Thrice sager than I e'er shall be.

\* \* \* \* \*

Truths!—hardly learn'd, and lately brought  
From many a far forgotten scene,  
Had I but listened, as I ought,  
To your voices, sage,—serene,  
O what might I not have been  
In the realms of thought!”

Dr. Johnson was fond of observing how mortifying a reflection it is for any man to consider what he has

done, compared with what he might have done. But he was not fond of having the observation applied, as sometimes it personally was, to himself. Lord Stowell, then Sir William Scott, once made bold to say to Johnson what a pity it was he had not followed the profession of the law: he might have been Lord Chancellor, and have taken the title of his native city, Lichfield, just then extinct, by the death of the peer who bore that name. The doctor is said to have seemed much agitated, and in an angry tone he exclaimed, "Why will you vex me by suggesting this, when it is too late?" It would hardly have ruffled him more, perhaps, for the moment at least, to have assumed his affinity with one whose

"—eye no more looked onward, but its gaze  
Rests where Remorse a life misspent surveys:  
What costly treasures strew that waste behind,  
What whirlwinds daunt the soul that sows the wind!  
By the dark shape of what he is, serene  
Stands the bright ghost of what he might have been."

A meditative essayist on the sentiment there is in grammar, after dealing with various of the tenses of verbs, affirms the most varied, the most useful, the most complicated in its sentimental relations and capacities, in its depths of regret, relief, passionate yearning, chastened joy, penitent sorrow, and bitter misery, among all the tenses, to be, without doubt the preterpluperfect subjunctive. We can none of us, he says, do without some of the grave warnings

which its experience burns upon the memory ; but most unhappy is the man who is driven to living in it altogether, and ceases to mingle the care for what is and what shall be with the sigh for what might have been.

XX.

*DEAD FRIENDS REMEMBERED IN THE  
DEAD OF NIGHT.*

WHEN to the sessions of sweet silent thought,  
our greatest poet summoned up remembrance  
of things past, he had to sigh the lack of many a  
thing he sought :

“ Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,  
For precious friends hid in death’s dateless night,  
And weep afresh love’s long-since cancelled woe,  
And moan the expense of many a vanish’d sight.”

Thomas Moore, under the pressure of recent bereavement, congratulated himself on being obliged to work hard by day, as it, in some degree, distracted his thoughts : “ The dreadful moment is that interval at night, when I have done working, and am preparing for bed. It is then everything most dreadful crowds upon me,” etc. Not that his grief was of what Scott somewhere calls that calm and concentrated kind which claims the hours of solitude and of night for its empire, and gradually wastes the springs of life. On that solitude which is not solitary, Rogers touches in a well-known passage :

“ Then, never less alone than when alone,  
Those that he loved so long and sees no more,  
Loved and still loves—not dead—but gone before,  
He gathers round him.”

to recall their departed relations with a sort of melancholy complacency, but she thought these had not watched them through lingering sickness, nor witnessed their last moments: it was these reminiscences that stood by her bedside at night, and rose at her pillow in the morning. Hers was just the temperament to enter into Hawthorne's sketch of a bitterly cold night in bed, when one speculates on the luxury of wearing out a whole existence there, like an oyster in its shell, content with the sluggish ecstasy of inaction, and drowsily conscious of nothing but delicious warmth; which idea, however, brings a hideous one in its train: you think how the dead are lying in their cold shrouds and narrow coffins, through the drear winter of the grave, and cannot persuade yourself that they neither shrink nor shiver, when the snow is drifting over their little hillocks, and the bitter blast howls against the door of the tomb. "That gloomy thought will collect a gloomy multitude, and throw its complexion over your wakeful hour." But it is not, happily, always or perhaps very often, thus, in the still night, that fond Memory brings the dead around us: "the eyes that shone, now dimmed and gone." The narrator of one of Dr. George Macdonald's stories describes in detail his habit, when alone in bed, of lying awake, and looking out into the room, peopling it with the forms of all the persons who had died within the scope of

his ken, and whose fancied forms were now vividly present to his imagination. Love, as well as fear, says Professor Wilson, peoples the night with phantoms. It is love prompts the strain of the stanzas concerning a longed-for lost one :

“All last night-tide she seem’d near me, like a lost beloved bird,  
Beating at the lattice louder than the sobbing wind and  
rain ;

And I call’d across the night with tender name and fondling  
word ;

And I yearn’d out through the darkness, all in vain.

“Heart will plead, ‘Eyes cannot see her : they are blind with  
tears of pain’;

And it climbeth up and straineth for dear life to look and  
hark

While I call her once again : but there cometh no refrain,  
And it droppeth down, and dieth in the dark.”

But what makes night memories of the dead a grief, is one’s remorse for having pained them in life. Bereaved we all must be, who live on and on, as Mr. Charles Reade says ; “but *this*, bereavement’s bitterest drop, we may avoid.” “O the anguish,” exclaims George Eliot, of that thought that we can never atone to our dead for the stinted affection we gave them, for the light answers we returned to their plaints or their pleadings, for the little reverence we showed to “that sacred human soul that lived so close to us, and was the divinest thing God had given us to know!” Yorick told the mourner over his dead ass that one comfort

he had, the consciousness of having been a merciful master to him. "Alas!" said the mourner, "I thought so, when he was alive; but now he is dead, I think otherwise." "Shame on the world!" presently said Yorick to himself—"did we love each other as this poor soul but loved his ass, 'twould be something." Theirs, one of the lesser Lake poets, in his own bereavement, writes,

"Theirs is the harder lot who mourn,  
Who, with a vain compunction, burn  
To expiate faults that grieved  
A breast they never more can pain,  
A heart they cannot please again—  
• The living, the bereaved.

"O vain complaint of selfishness !  
Weak wish to paralyse distress !  
The tears, the pang, the groan,  
Are justly mine, who once possess'd,  
Yet sometimes pain'd, the fondest breast  
Where love was ever known."

Readers of the Diary of Mr. Windham may remember the bitterness of his reflections on not having completed the happiness of his aged mother by sacrifices so slight as hardly to be known under that character. How bitter, to his thinking, the regrets which spring from the consciousness of omissions towards persons whom death has taken from us; to whom no compensation can be made; whom no sentiments of kindness can reach; who cannot even have the satisfaction of knowing the

pain which that reflection excites in us! How different, he persuades himself, would his state of mind be at present, had he acted for some years past under impressions similar to those which he now felt and such as he would have acted under had his mother's life been extended a few years longer! "'Tis dreadful to think how much happiness has been lost to a person whose happiness I was bound by so many ties to promote, merely for want of such attentions as it would have cost me nothing to pay, and such as in a short time I should have paid with great pleasure." All that he had forborne to do, short of a studious attention to her happiness, now stood as a direct charge against himself, and he felt it to be a source of lasting reproach which time could never wholly efface. His only consolation was that latterly the difference between what was done and what ought to have been done, was less than at any former period, and was every day decreasing, so as to make, he was sure, a great difference in his mother's happiness—perhaps so as to make her feel, reflecting on what was past and anticipating what was to come, that her wishes were nearly satisfied. "I do not know, however, how much more a little reflection even would have made me do then, and how much more would have come of itself, had her life been a little prolonged. That this additional period was not granted, and, still more, that that reflection

was not made, must be a subject of very painful regret." The mature statesman adds, that in the picture of his mother now impressed on his mind, nothing was seen but what inspired tenderness and kindness; her faults \* disappeared, and her merits only remained.

It is a commonplace, this remark; but to such commonplaces, only a heart below the common will fail to beat responsive, in sad assent. Mr. Lister tells us of the mother of Lord Arlington, and of that son's sensations on losing her while at college, "She had never been a judicious parent, but she had been warmly and uniformly affectionate. Of this alone—of her ardent and unvarying love for him, was he now sensible." Her want of judgment, which was an error on the side of fondness and indulgence, he would remember rather among her virtues than her failings, and she would be but the dearer to him on that account.

"How gladly would the man recall to life  
The boy's neglected sire ! a mother too,  
That softer friend, perhaps more gladly still,  
Might he demand them at the gates of death.

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\* "I must not wholly dissemble the faults of my mother, which checked affection on my part; nor condemn as wholly unfounded the reason I had for questioning the extent and nature of the affection on hers. Latterly these faults were either worn away or lost in consideration of her infirmities."—*Diary of the Right Hon. W. Windham*, p. 247.

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Sorrow has, since they went, subdued and tamed  
The playful humour ; he could now endure  
(Himself grown sober in the vale of years)  
And feel a parent's presence no restraint.  
But not to understand a treasure's worth  
Till time has stolen away the slighted good,  
Is cause of half the poverty we feel,  
And makes the world the wilderness it is."

One is inclined to apply Horace's bit of self-questioning, why had he not, as a boy, the same sentiments that he had now,—*Quæ mens est hodie, cur eadem non puerō fuit?* Or, failing the possibility of *that*, why, in the present state of his feelings, did not his cheeks become boyishly beardless once again,—*Vel cur his animis incolumes non redeunt gene?*

Seen in the actual present, dear kinsfolk all have some fault, some flaw, as a student of home relations and heart affinities observes ; but gone from us, we see them in their permanent and better selves. Thus, as of our distant home we remember not one dark day, not one servile care, nothing but "the echo of its holy hymns and the radiance of its brightest days,"—so of a father, not one hasty word, but only the fulness of his manly vigour and noble tenderness,—of a mother, nothing of mortal weakness, but a glorified form of love. Speaking of the pathos which belongs only to the Dead, Mr. Carlyle says that the Past is all holy to us ; the Dead are all holy, even they that were base and wicked while

alive. “Their baseness and wickedness was not *They*, was but the heavy and unmanageable environment that lay round them, with which they fought unprevailing.” Byron’s biographer relates that however estranged from his mother that poet’s feelings must be allowed to have been while she lived, her death seems to have restored them into their natural channel; and that, whether from a return of early fondness and the “all-atoning power of the grave,” or from the prospect of ‘that void in his future life which this loss of his only link with the past would leave, it is certain he felt the death of that strange parent very acutely. Crabbe was true to nature, as usual, in saying that,

“——when our friends we lose,  
“ Our alter’d feelings dictate to our views ;  
What in their tempers teased us or distress’d,  
Is, with our anger and the dead, at rest ;  
And much we grieve, no longer trial made,  
For that impatience which we then displayed ;  
Now to their love and worth of every kind,  
A soft compunction turns th’ afflicted mind ;  
Virtues neglected then, adored become,  
And graces slighted blossom on the tomb.”

Fielding’s Mrs. Bennett records of her feelings on the loss of an estranged father, “Notwithstanding all the disengagements I had lately received from him, I was sincerely afflicted at my loss of him. All his kindness to me in my infancy, all his kindness to me while I was growing up, recurred to my memory,

raised a thousand melancholy ideas, and totally obliterated all thoughts of his latter behaviour, for which I made also every allowance, and every excuse in my power." So the Violet of a more recent hand, recalling every act of kindness of her parents : "She cherished such recollections as a feeling mind is wont to do—those that are the most painful. She would not spare herself a single agony ; and she, who would fain have been so kind, so considerate, towards everything that was human, became a prey to deep remorse." The last breath of rugged, harsh, exacting, despotic Friedrich Wilhelm II. having fled, Mr. Carlyle pictures for us the Crown Prince Frederick hurrying to a private room, and sitting there all in tears, looking back through the gulfs of the Past, upon such a Father now rapt away for ever. "Sad all, and soft in the moonlight of memory,—the lost Loved One all in the right as we now see, we all in the wrong." This, it appears, was that son's fixed opinion. John Sterling takes earnest note how much death deepens our affections and sharpens our regret for whatever has been even slightly amiss in our conduct towards those who are gone. "What trifles then swell into painful importance ; how we believe that, could the past be recalled, life would present no worthier, happier task, than that of so bearing ourselves towards those we love, that we might ever after find nothing but melodious tranquility breathing

about their graves!" Till the last hour comes, said Charlotte Bronté, we never know how much we can forgive, pity, regret a near relative. At the sudden death of his father, Adam Bede's mind rushed back over the past in a flood of relenting and pity. "When death, the great Reconciler, has come, it is never our tenderness that we repent of, but our severity." So with old Lisbeth. The sudden death of her husband restored him to that first place in her affections which he had held six-and-twenty years before: she had forgotten his faults as we forget the sorrows of our departed childhood. And later we are told how constantly Adam's thoughts ran on what the old man's feelings had been in moments of humiliation, when he had held down his head before the rebukes of his son. "When our indignation is borne in submissive silence, we are apt to feel twinges of doubt afterwards as to our own generosity, if not justice; how much more when the object of our anger has gone into everlasting silence, and we have seen his face, for the last time, in the meekness of death!"\*

\* "Ah, I was always too hard," Adam said to himself. "It seems to me now, if I was to find father at home to-night, I should behave different; but there's no knowing—perhaps nothing 'ud be a lesson to us if it didn't come too late. It's well we should feel as life's a reckoning we can't make twice over; there's no real making amends in this world, any more nor you can mend a wrong subtraction by doing your addition right"—*Adam Bede*, book ii., chapter xviii.

In one of Justin McCarthy's books there is a passage descriptive of what one feels towards the dying,—where Grace longs to throw her arms round Mabel's neck, and kiss her, and beg to be forgiven for any chance impatience or passing ebullition of temper in the irrevocable days gone by. Fenimore Cooper's Hetty, in *The Deerslayer*, recounts what she felt "when mother was dying. I remembered everything I had said and done to vex her, and could have kissed her feet for forgiveness. I think it must be so with all dying people." A fragmentary poem by the late Mrs. Richard Trench is pitched in this minor key :

"There is a grief that knows no end,  
A sorrow time can never quell,  
Barbed arrow which remorse can send  
For ever in the heart to dwell :  
And each offence to those we love,  
How slight soe'er in others' eye,  
The never-dying worm will prove  
When in the silent tomb they lie."

So Edward Quillinan, in his Elegy, owns to standing in blank despair and vain remorse,

"While all my faults, held light in happier times,  
From death's pale shadow took the hue of crimes."

Mr. Coventry Patmore, among an aggregate of regretful memories, self-upbraidings, and unavailing sighs, enumerates—

"The hour which might have been more kind,  
And now less fertile in vain tears ;

The good of common intercourse,  
For daintier graces then despised,  
Now with what passionate remorse,  
What poignancy of hunger prized !”

as well as “the little wrong, now greatly rued, which no repentance now could right.” Hearty if homely is the utterance of Jane Taylor’s recognition, in one breath, of parental foibles as possible, and of death’s cancelling of them once for all, and (in a good sense) for good :

“ They had their failings,—ah, dear parents ! how  
Those few infirmities are vanish’d now !  
Would that I now could bear them, now too late,  
Sustain and soothe instead of aggravate !”

How true it is, of every loved and lost one, to perhaps misapply a sacred text, quite diverse in its proper application, that, to us, he being dead yet speaketh. The dead and gone—there is no speech or language of the living where their voice is not heard. The voices of the dead come home to the living as do the songs of other years.

Night has its magic in reviving with all fidelity of accent, with almost cruel veracity of tone and cadence and inflection, these voices of the dead. Like many another stock quotation—notably, for instance, Shakespeare’s “One touch of nature”—Heber’s familiar line, by dint of isolation from the context, has come to be wrested from its original import. Heber meant

it of the voices of a past generation, to us unknown ; and the songs of years that belong to bygone centuries. Not the voices of our dead, yet dear ; not the songs that thrilled our youth, still remembered with wistful affection ; but the voices and songs of a dim antiquity, revived to a vivid imagination by the survey of hallowed antiquities.

“ . . . And Tadmor thus, and Syrian Balbec rose.  
. . . There oft the houseless Santon rests reclined,  
Strange shapes he views, and drinks with wond’ring ears  
The voices of the dead, and songs of other years.”

But whenever the line is cited now-a-days, it is in reference to the voices and songs of *our* dead, and of *our* other years ; voices that once spoke to our heart of hearts, and in memory and fancy do so still—songs that cheered or melted us in the olden times of which the echoes linger yet, in linked sweetness long drawn out. And in this sense, the conventionally accepted meaning of Heber’s line, is it proposed to annotate or illustrate it in the present medley.

To quote direct, between inverted commas, a whole line from another poet in the body of one’s own poem, is not perhaps the highest art, though Wordsworth and others of authority have sanctioned, by resorting to, the practice. But it may be effectively done at times ; and Mr. W. Stewart Rose effectively wound up with Heber’s line his own episode on Scott’s visit to him at Gundimore. Walter Scott had been his guest there, and with him had walked and cruised

and rode—wandered about the New Forest, threaded the Narrows of Hurst, explored the dockyards at Portsmouth. Foscolo, too, and Coleridge had paced the ribbed sea-sands with the same kind host. And now all were gone.

“Alone, such friends and comrades I deplore,  
And peopled but with phantoms is the shore :  
Hence have I fled my haunted beach ; yet so  
Would not alike a sylvan home forego.  
Though wakening fond regrets, its sere and yellow  
Leaves, and sweet inland murmur, serve to mellow  
And soothe the sobered sorrow they recall,  
When mantled in the faded garb of fall ;—  
But wind and wave—unlike the sighing sedge  
And murmuring leaf—give grief a coarser edge :  
And in each howling blast my fancy hears  
‘The voices of the dead, and songs of other years.’”

Wordsworth never forgot the tone of Sir Walter’s voice, when sadly quoting a stanza of Wordsworth’s own Yarrow lyrics, on the eve of quitting his native country for Campania’s shores. Together the two poets had stood, years before, in their prime of strength, on old Helvellyn’s brow, rejoicing, as if earth were free from sorrow, like the sky above their heads. Years followed years, and when, upon the eve of Scott’s

“—— last going from Tweed-side, thought turned,  
Or by another’s sympathy was led,  
To this bright land, Hope was for him no friend,  
Knowledge no help ; Imagination shaped  
No promise. Still, in more than ear-deep seats,  
Survives for me, and cannot but survive,

The tone of voice which wedded borrowed words  
To sadness not their own, when, with faint smile  
Forced by intent to take from speech its edge,  
He said, 'When I am there, although 'tis fair,  
'Twill be another Yarrow.'

An example, by the way, not merely of a poet conveying a quotation into his verses, but—what is noteworthy characteristic of Wordsworth—making that quotation from himself.

Sir Walter Scott's journal and letters show him to have had a quick ear for the voices of the dead. He somewhere says—in reference to a sudden revival of an old intimacy—that hardly anything makes the mind recoil so much upon itself as the being suddenly and strongly recalled to times long past, and that by the voice of one we have loved. And his keenly sensitive, though robust and healthy, nature was all alive to the sounds he heard in his mind's ear, as was Hamlet to the sight he saw in his mind's eye. It might be in a dream by night he heard the voice, or in a day-dream at sunny noon-tide: either way he heard it. One day he fell asleep in his chair, while working—over-working—at his *Life of Napoleon*; and during those few minutes of slumber, he records, "I heard, as I thought, my poor wife call me by the familiar name of fondness which she gave me. My recollections on waking were melancholy enough. These be

'The airy tongues that syllable men's names.'

All, I believe, have some natural desire to consider

these unusual impressions as bodements of good or evil to come. But, alas ! this is a prejudice of our own conceit. They are the empty echoes of what is past, not the foreboding voice of things to come." A month later, when preparing for a journey to London, and perhaps to Paris, about which he feels down-hearted—the preparations recalling a thousand painful ideas of former happier journeys—he makes this entry again: "My wife's figure seems to stand before me, and her voice is in my ears—'Scott, do not go.' It half frightens me. Strange throbbing at my heart and a disposition to be sick. . . . Poor, poor Charlotte !" But the tender grace of a day that was dead would never come back to him : if he sighed the more, it was because he sighed in vain for the living presence of that dead and gone form, for the living utterance of that unforgotten voice.

"But oh for the touch of a vanish'd hand,  
And the sound of a voice that is still !"

So writes Mr. Tennyson in one of the most pathetic and melodious—most musical, most melancholy—of his lyrics. And there is another witching melody of his, published among his later miscellaneous verses, which is in the key-note, the key a minor, of our theme :

"All along the valley, stream that flashest white,  
Deepening thy voice with the deepening of the night,  
All along the valley, where thy waters flow,  
I walk'd with one I loved two-and-thirty years ago.

All along the valley while I walk'd to-day,  
The two-and-thirty years were a mist that rolls away ;  
For all along the valley, down thy rocky bed  
Thy living voice to me was as the voice of the dead,  
And all along the valley, by rock and cave and tree,  
The voice of the dead was a living voice to me."

A younger poet, whose lines betoken study of the laureate, though less so than of Mr. Browning and his gifted wife, has this among other passages quotable for the purpose :

" Then those that brood above the fallen sun,  
Or lean from lonely casements to the moon,  
Turn round and miss the touching of a hand :  
Then sad thoughts seem to be more sweet than gay ones :  
Then old songs have a sound as pitiful  
As dead friend's voices, sometimes heard in dreams."

And one of his lyrics begins :

" Thy voice across my spirit falls  
Like some spent sea-wind through dim halls  
Of ocean-kings, left bare and wide  
(Green floors o'er which the sea-weed crawls),  
Where once, long since, in festal pride  
Some chief, who roved and ruled the tide,  
Among his brethren reign'd and died."

When Villars, in one of Miss Lee's *Canterbury Tales*, recalls the scene of his Julia's death-bed, " and all the dreadful ceremony of the last agonising farewell," he is represented as groaning out a thousand times the futile *utinam*,

" Oh that her voice, though low as then it seem'd,  
Could reach me now ! "

But there was neither voice, nor any that answered, nor—to all seeming—any that regarded.

“ In vain, sad Harp, the midnight air,  
Among thy chords doth sigh ;  
In vain it seeks an echo there  
Of voices long gone by.”

The royal prisoner, Edward, in one of the Plays on the Passions, rejects his jailor’s offer to stop a rent in the old walls, and so keep out the cold wind o’ nights. Let the wind enter, and welcome : it shall not be stopped, the captive protests : who visits him besides the winds of heaven ? who mourns with him but the sad sighing wind ?

“ Who bringeth to mine ear the mimick’d tones  
Of voices once beloved, and sounds long past,  
But the light-wing’d and many-voicèd wind ?”

Talfourd presents Adrastus vehemently moved by the living voice of Ion, as so closely resembling and too vividly recalling that of his dead wife :

“ — That tone ! that tone !  
Whence came it ? from thy lips ? It cannot be—  
The long-hush’d music of the only voice  
That ever spake unbought affection to me,  
And waked my soul to blessing !—O sweet hours  
Of golden joy, ye come ! your glories break  
Through my pavilion’d spirit’s sable folds !  
Roll on ! roll on !”

A sort of parallel passage occurs in one of Sheridan Knowles’s earlier tragedies—in the scene where the friends of Virginius seek to stir his benumbed senses,

and recall him to himself, as he kneels beside the tyrant he has slain in the dungeon-cell. His brother-in-law Numitorius repeats again and again his name; but it is not until Icilius, dead Virginia's affianced husband, takes up the call, that Virginius is roused:

“That voice—that voice—I know that voice !  
It minds me of a voice was coupled with it,  
And made such music, once to hear it was  
Enough to make it ever after be  
Remembered.”

Aytoun's Blind Old Milton muses on his “bride of immortal beauty—ever dear !” despite of years, and woes, and want, and pain, his soul yearns back towards her :

“I hear again thy voice, more silver sweet  
Than fancied music floating in a dream,  
Possess my being.”

Nathaniel Hawthorne's posthumous fragment, entitled *Pansie*, tells effectively and affectingly how the little child of that name was dear to her great grandfather, Dr. Dolliver, because long inaudible voices of an intermediate generation sobbed, shouted, or laughed in her familiar tones. His chilled sensibilities were quickened, as some inflection of her voice set his memory ringing and chiming with forgotten sounds.

From day-dreamy or night-waking echoes or resoundings of hushed voices, turn we for a brief space to those visions of vanished forms which restore them to the sleeper until he awakes, and, behold, it was a dream.

A dissertator on dreamland hails as "preëminent and radiant" one privilege, to the enjoyment of which every traveller in what he calls "the land of Reconciled Impossibilities" is entitled,—the privilege of beholding the Dead Alive. For the King of Terrors is affirmed to have no power in the domains of the Impossible: the dead move and speak and laugh, as they were wont to move and speak and laugh, in the old days when they were alive, and when we loved them. "They have been dead—of course—we know it and they say so—but they are alive now; and, thanks to the irresistible logic of the Impossible kingdom, we slightly question how." These visitors, their recorder goes on to say, have no grim tales to tell, no secrets of their prison-house to reveal: we see the old familiar faces in the old familiar way; the life-blood courses warmly through the old friendly hands; dead babies crow and battle valorously in nurses' arms; dead elders reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all the old authority; dead schoolmasters awe; dead boon companions sing the old song and tell the old stories,—till we wake into the kingdom of the Possible; and with a deep-drawn "Ah me!" the recorder's eye turns to a vacant chair, a faded miniature, a lock of soft hair in crumpled tissue paper, a broken toy; while his mind's vision recurs to a green mound, and a half-effaced stone. "In a dream one always seems to forget that there is any such thing as death," says the tried heroine of a popular tale, re-

counting her recent experience : "I have seen dead people restored to life, and have felt no surprise in seeing them.—Says Onora, in the *Lay of the Brown Rosary*,"

" I only walk among the fields, beneath the autumn sun,  
With my dead father, hand in hand, as I have often done. . . .  
I never more can walk with him, oh, never more but so.  
For they have tied my father's feet beneath the kirkyard-stone. . . .  
And then he calleth through my dreams, he calleth tenderly,—  
' Come forth, my daughter, my beloved, and walk the fields  
with me.'"

Dr. Johnson drew up a solemn prayer the night after losing his wife, that he might "enjoy the good effects of her attention and ministration" in dreams, if so God willed. Boswell, who cites the prayer in full, adds the remark, that what actually followed upon this "most interesting piece of devotion by Johnson," we are not informed. But what then? Boswell could supply that which was lacking by a communication of personal experience. He, too, was a widower; and he, too, was a devout believer in dreams, and a declared expert in their mysteries. "But I, whom it has pleased God to afflict in a similar manner, . . . have certain experience of benignant communication by dreams." No doubt he knew by heart, and often, probably, repeated from the heart, the invocation in the *Castle of Indolence*, addressed to those guardian

spirits who shield from hostile ones the midnight gloom,—

“Angels of fancy and of love, be near,  
And o'er the blank of sleep diffuse a bloom :

\* \* \* \* \*

But chief, a-while, oh lend us from the tomb  
Those long-lost friends for whom in love we smart,  
And fill with pious awe and joy-mix'd woe the heart.”

We have seen that Sir Walter Scott notes in his Diary, some four months after the death of his wife, how, in a broken sleep, he heard her, as he thought, call him by the familiar name of fondness which she gave him, and how miserable was the sense of a void and vacancy on waking. And we have seen that as regards the prevalent disposition, so humanly natural in poor human nature, to put a supernatural construction on these imagined voices and airy tongues, *that* he regretfully takes to be a prejudice of our own conceit. He could have smiled a melancholy smile at Sir Thomas Browne's comment on the deep dejection of certain kinsfolk of a now dead Friend, at his dreaming of his dead friends, “inconsequently divining, that he should not be long from them ; for strange it was not that he should sometimes dream of the dead, whose thoughts ran always upon death.”\* As in the lines of Rogers to one sister *in*

\* “Beside, to dream of the dead, so they appear not in dark habits, and take nothing away from us, in Hippocrates' sense

*memoriam* of another, by whose dying bed she had waited so lovingly and longingly to the last :

“And now to thee she comes ; still, still the same  
As in the hours gone unregarded by ;  
To thee, how changed, comes as she ever came ;  
Health on her cheek, and pleasure in her eye !”

Byron describes as “dazzling” that “too transcendent vision to Sorrow’s phantom-peopled slumber given,

“When heart meets heart again in dreams Elysian,  
And paints the lost on Earth revived in Heaven.”

Mrs. Hemans has a memorial sonnet entitled “Dreams of the Dead,” wherein she records how oft in still night-dreams a departed face bends o’er her with sweet earnestness of eye, wearing no more a trace of earthly pains ; and therefore is a benison invoked on sleep, whose spells are mighty

“To glorify with reconciling breath,  
Effacing, brightening ; giving forth to shine  
Beauty’s high truth, and how much more divine  
Thy power when link’d in this with thy strong brother—  
Death !”

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was of good signification. . . . And Cardan, who dreamed that he discoursed with his dead father in the moon, made thereof no mortal interpretation : and even to dream that we are dead, was no condemnable phantom in old oneiro-criticism, as having a signification of liberty, vacuity from cares, exemption and freedom from troubles unknown unto the dead.” —Sir Thomas Browne, *Letter to a Friend* (the latter portion of which was included in the *Christian Morals*).

De Quincey apostrophizes opium, in prose at least as poetical—hailing in it the power to call into sunny light, “from the anarchy of dreaming sleep,” the faces of long-buried beauties, and the blessed household countenances, cleansed from the “dishonours of the grave.” Southey gives us Monnema’s consolation of this kind for the loss of Quiara :

“ Yet to behold his face again, and hear  
His voice, though painful, was a deep delight :  
It was a joy to think that he was near,  
To see him in the visions of the night . . .  
And though he might not bless her waking sight  
With his dear presence, ‘twas a blessed thing  
That sleep would thus sometimes his actual image bring.”

So with those lines of Dr. M. J. Chapman, the Hebrew Idylist, beginning, “May I be like my mother in my life!” and going on to tell how

“ I only recollect her in my dreams ;  
Then oft I see a pale face over me,  
And folded arms that open to embrace me,  
And sometimes feel a kiss upon my lips,  
A mother’s kiss—but ever as the day  
Breathes light around my bed, the vision flies,  
And so I lose my mother.”

Bright be thy dreams ! is Moore’s metrical wish for a weeper, whose weeping he would fain see turned into smiles by visions of the night :

“ May those by death or seas removed,  
The friends, who in thy spring-time knew thee,  
All thou hast ever prized or loved,  
In dreams come smiling to thee !”

William Thom of Inverary sings how bright are the beams that "halo" his "hame in yon dear land o' dreams":

"Then weel may I welcome the nicht's deathly reign,  
Wi' souls o' the dearest I mingle me then ;  
The gowd licht o' mornin' is lichtless to me,  
But oh for the nicht wi' its ghost revelrie !"

And even so does William Sidney Walker congratulate a far-off sister that oft in the mystery of sleep shall Love evoke them from the deep of the unfathomed Past, and Fancy gather round her bed the spirits of the gentle Dead.

While bereavement is recent, the whither away of dead friends, the where and the how of their present existence, are problems that are apt to press on the spirit, pressing for an answer, though answer there can be none.

"Ah, Christ, that it were possible  
For one short hour to see  
The souls we loved, that they might tell us  
What and where they be !"

Webster's Duchess of Malfi has a larger wish in point of time, and indeed of purpose too :

"— Oh that it were possible we might  
But hold some two days' conference with the dead !  
From them I should learn somewhat, I am sure,  
I never shall know here."

Who, exclaims Madame de Staël, has not hoped, in the ardour of his prayers, that the one dear shade

would reappear, and miracles be wrought by the force of love? "Vain trust! beyond the tomb we can see nothing. These endless uncertainties occupy not the vulgar; but the nobler the mind the more incontrolably is it involved in speculations." Dante professes in his prose analysis of one of his sonnets (*Vita Nuova*) to state how he sees his dead Beatrice as she really is—that is to say, in a state of exaltation which passes his comprehension: his thought rises to a conception of her state, which his understanding cannot grasp; "forasmuch as our understanding occupies the same place in regard to those blessed spirits, as our feeble eye in regard to the sun."\* One of the German critics of Euripides signalizes the Greek poet's forbearance, in not allowing Alcestis to speak on her

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\* Here are some of the lines of the sonnet in question, as Englished by Mr. Theodore Martin in his delightful version of the *Vita Nuova* (2nd ed., 1871, p. 80):—

"Beyond the sphere that widest rolls above,  
The sigh that issues from my heart is borne,  
Winged by a new intelligence, which love  
Infuseth—love with mighty anguish torn.  
  
When it hath gained the haven of its ease,  
It sees a lady whom the saints adore,  
So radiant, that the pilgrim spirit sees  
With awe the splendours that around her pour.  
  
It sees her in such wise, that when it seeks  
To tell the tale, at my sad heart's demand,  
So deep its words, I understand them not!  
Yet of that lady sweet I know it speaks."

return from the nether world, lest he might draw aside the mysterious veil which shrouds the condition of the dead, as deserving of high praise. "O my children, whither are you gone?" are the words commemorated by Plutarch as the only words of Cratesiclea, when her children were put to death before her eyes. But the historian of Latin Christianity can put his finger on a point of time when the mystery of the state after death began to cease to be a mystery: the subtle and immaterial soul gradually materialised itself to the keen sight of the devout. Nor was hell by any means the inexorable dwelling which restored not its inhabitants; men being transported thither for a short time, and returning to reveal its secrets to the shuddering world. The fourth book of the Dialogues of Grégoire the Great is "entirely filled with legends of departing and of departed spirits, several of which revisit the light of day." A Highland proverb, of which the translation is, "Earth, earth, on the mouth of Oran, that he may blab no more," is founded on the tradition that Oran, a follower of Columba, was buried as a sacrifice at the building of Iona; that Columba opened the grave three days later, and Oran told him that hell was not the sort of place it was reported to be; whereupon Columba, to prevent his impiously communicating the idea to others, called out to those who were with him in the words of that proverb. And if there were living men to whom it had been vouchsafed to visit

and to return, and to reveal the secrets of remote and terrible Hell, there were those too who, as Dean Milman states the popular belief, were admitted in vision, or in actual life, to more accessible Purgatory, and brought back intelligence of its real local existence, and of the state of souls within its penitential circles. Among the enumerated instances there is a legend of St. Paul himself; of the French monk St. Farcy; of Drithelm, related by Bede; of the Emperor Charles the Fat, by William of Malmesbury. Two or three journeys, "very wild and fantastic," of an Essex peasant, are related by Matthew Paris; while the Purgatory of St. Patrick, the Purgatory of Owen Miles, the vision of Alberic of Monte Casino, etc., were among the "most popular and wide-spread legends of the ages preceding Dante; and as in Hell,\* so in Purgatory, Dante sums up in his noble verses the whole theory, the whole popular belief as to this intermediate sphere." But it is to be noted that if Hell and Purgatory thus dimly divulged their gloomy mysteries, and had been visited by those who returned to actual life, Heaven was unapproached, unapproach-

\* Mr. Buckle reproaches the Scottish (reformed) clergy of the seventeenth century for not being ashamed to propagate a story of a boy who, in a trance, had been mysteriously conveyed to hell, and thence permitted to revisit the earth. His account, carefully preserved by the Rev. Robert Wodrow, was, that "ther wer great fires and men roasted in them, and then cast into rivers of cold water, and then into boyling water; others hung up by the tongues."—Wodrow, *Analecta*, i, 51.

able. “To be rapt to the higher Heaven remained the privilege of the Apostle ; the popular conception was content to rest in modest ignorance.” For although the Saints might confessedly descend on beneficent missions to the world of man, they as confessedly brought but vague and indefinite tidings of the site of their beatitude, of the state of the Blest, and of the joys of the supernal world.

“ In what new region to the just assign’d,  
What new employments please th’ unbodied mind ?  
A wingèd Virtue, thro’ th’ ethereal sky,  
From world to world unwearied does he fly ;  
Or curious trace the long laborious maze  
Of heaven’s decrees, where wondering angels gaze ?  
Does he delight to hear bold seraphs tell  
How Michael battled, and the Dragon fell ?  
Or, mixt with milder cherubim, to glow  
In hymns of love, not ill essay’d below ? ”

So speculates Mr. Tickell in respect of Addison ; and the speculation is as prosaic in form as some such are romantic both in form and spirit.

The Legend of St. Laura, of which Mr. Peacock gave a version in *Gryll Grange*, closes with the question and answer, or rather the unanswered and unanswerable question,—

“ But whither passed the virgin saint,  
To slumber far away . . . . ?  
None knew, and none may ever know :  
Angels the secret keep :  
Impenetrable ramparts bound,  
Eternal silence dwells around  
The chamber of her sleep.”

Lauderdale, in *A Son of the Soil*, calls it "an awfu' marvel, beyond my reach, when a word of communication would make a' the difference, why it's no permitted, if it were but to keep a heart from breaking now and then." No one, as Mr. Caldwell Roscoe says, no one at least with a heart to feel, or an imagination to be moved, can in his deeper moods look with other than earnest solicitude, with awe and profound stirrings of the emotions, into the life that lies beyond, but we know not how close to, this ; which must soon receive ourselves, and into which has already passed so much that seemed very part of our own being ; whose gates have been so often washed with our tears, and from whose silence we have so passionately implored a sign—so passionately and so unavailingly. For there are times, he writes, when faith is weak, and the heart yearns for knowledge ; when it seems to us as if all hopes and fears were bound up around the insupportable longing for one gleam, however brief, of certainty to shine through the darkness. With him we know there is no answer to this cry, day by day climbing after the wings of death from many a desolated home. But is it meant to be indulged ? Is what is denied to this supplication to be granted to a cold, and what he would call, as it is sometimes manifested, a prurient curiosity ? "It is sometimes the hardest trial of human nature to rest upon the silence of God ; but is it better to do so, or to seek consolation

in rapping of tables?" He cites the instance personally known to him of a woman gray with grief and years, who, having lost her children in early life, refused to leave her room, and devoted herself to reading all the books which should solve the question of immortality, and give her a certainty that those she had lost yet lived. "She pored incessantly in her solitary life over metaphysics and philosophy; and the suns of many years rose on eyes quenched in tears, and a spirit in which hope gained no fresh ground against despair." Yet such an intellectual research he justly deems to be at least nobler than the shallowness which finds its certainty in its own or other people's delusions, and exchanges the broad support of personal trust in the divine character for the feeble sustainment of those so-called revelations, and will rather ask questions from unspiritual spiritualist and imposing impostor, cis-Atlantic or trans-Atlantic, than from the hopes and the affections implanted in our own hearts.

The mummy in Belzoni's Exhibition, as addressed by Horace Smith, is a representative being as being mum :

" Still silent, incommunicative elf !  
Art sworn to secrecy? then keep thy vows ;  
But prithee tell us something of thyself ;  
Reveal the secrets of thy prison-house ;  
Since in the world of spirits thou hast slumbered,  
What hast thou seen—what strange adventures numbered ?"

In Moldavia, when a peasant has escaped death, and only just escaped it, in a severe illness, so that he seems to come up again from being veritably within the gates of the grave, his friends press around his bed, we are told, to ask him what he has seen in the other world, and what news he has for them of or from their dead kinsfolk. "Then the poor invalid interprets his visions for them as well as he can," says M. Louis Figuier, in that strange post-mortem monograph of his,—a foregoing paragraph of which enunciates the not over intelligible proposition, that there is a period, often of some hours' duration, during which, life having completely left the body, it is a corpse the bystanders look upon, yet a corpse that still moves and speaks. He explains—if it be an explanation—that the soul which survives in the really dead body, is not the soul of the terrestrial man, but of the "super-human being," who is *the* being of M. Figuier's quasi-scientific treatise, or as Isaac Taylor entitled his more sober speculations,—physical theory of another life. But quasi-science goes a very little way indeed to solve or to silence the irrepressible query, the obstinate questioning,

"Tell us, ye dead, will none of you, in pity  
To those you left behind disclose the secret?  
O that some courteous ghost would blab it out,  
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be.  
I've heard that souls departed have sometimes  
Forewarn'd men of their deaths. 'Twas kindly done

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To knock and give the alarum. But what means  
This stinted charity? 'tis but lame kindness  
That does its work by halves. Why might you not  
Tell us what 'tis to die? Do the strict laws  
Of your society forbid your speaking  
Upon a point so nice? I'll ask no more.  
Sullen, like lamps in sepulchres, your shine  
Enlightens but yourselves. Well—'tis no matter;  
A very little time will clear up all,  
And make us learned as you are, and as close."

The "Well, 'tis no matter," will jar on many an anxious inquirer, as too much in the style of Mr. Toots. And it must be owned that in this passage, as in others of *The Grave*, Robert Blair is as deadly lively as his theme will very well bear.

John Foster's letters abound with speculations on possible visits from departed friends, for once commissioned to make some disclosures of the unseen economy, and with "earnest inquisitiveness" prompting him, in such a hypothetical case, to the eager inquiries, Where is the place of spirits—in what realm of the creation—and have they an abode fixed to one locality? Do they exist as absolutely unembodied spirits, or have they some material vehicles, and if so, of what nature? How was their entrance into that other life "verified" to them, and with what emotion? How does the strange phenomenon, Death, appear to them, now that they look back upon it? He was exceptionally disposed indeed to listen to accounts of supernatural appearances, so

manifest was his earnest longing, not unmixed with hope, that a ray of light might, from this quarter, as his biographer words it, gleam across the "shaded frontier." After the death of his wife there is a constant recurrence in his letters of surmisings whither is she gone—in what manner does she consciously realize to herself the astonishing change—in what manner does she think, and feel, and act, and communicate with other spiritual beings—how does she take account of time, and what are her remembrances and feeling respecting him and other kins-folk survivors here on earth? "Earnest imaginings and questionings like these arise without end; and still, still there is no answer, no revelation. The mind comes again and again close up to the thick black veil; but there is no perforation, no glimpse." What hope of answer? Behind the veil, *behind* the veil! John Foster's dead Maria had often talked with him in life on the mystery of this blank, this reticence, this impenetrable reserve. "The mystery, the frustration of our inquisitiveness, was equal to us both. What a stupendous difference *now!* . . . . But she knows why it is proper that I should for a while continue still in the dark, should share no part of her new and marvellous revelation." After the death of *any* friend, indeed, he was observably and confessedly impatient to become acquainted with the secrets of the invisible world. And this impatience rather increased than diminished with advancing

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age ; on one occasion of the kind, only about a year before his own decease, we find him exclaiming, "They don't come back to tell us!" and then, after a short silence, emphatically striking his hand upon the table, and adding, with a look of intense seriousness, "But we shall know *some time!*" How gladly would Frederick Perthes know more about the nature of the assured happiness of his dead children : "I cannot help thinking about it, though I know that it is in vain, and that on this, as on all other great questions, we can do nothing more in this world than keep alive in ourselves the yearning and longing after truth." At a much later period we read of him as pacing the room alone, even after long years, and crying, "My Randolph, my Randolph, where and what art thou now?" He was anxious, however, in his last illness, to check a tendency in those around him to speculate or inquire into our condition after death. It does no good, he assured them, and diverts the mind from the main point. "Ah, the dead do not come back," was St. Augustine's lonely sigh some thirty years after the death of Monica ; "for, had it been possible, there has not been a night when I should not have seen my mother!" A commentator on this *suspirium de profundis*, would have us think too of poor Eugénie de Guérin, trying to continue her little journal, "To Maurice in Heaven," till the awful, answerless stillness made her shut up the book, and lay aside the pen.

“ Friends, brothers, and sisters, are laid side by side,  
Yet none have saluted, and none have replied.”

*Beyond the Veil* is the title of the beautiful lines of Henry Vaughan, the Silurist, beginning, “ They are all gone into the world of life,” and containing this apostrophe to

“ Dear, beauteous Death ! the jewel of the just,  
Shining nowhere but in the dark ;  
What mysteries do lie beyond thy dust ;  
Could man outlook that mark !

He that hath found some fledged bird’s nest, may know  
At first sight if the bird be flown ;  
But what fair dell or grove he sings in now,  
That is to him unknown.

And yet as angels, in some brighter dreams,  
Call to the soul, when man doth sleep,  
So some strange thoughts transcend our wonted themes,  
And into glory peep.”

How oft at midnight had William Herbert, as he tells us, fixed his gaze upon the blue unclouded firmament, with thousand spheres illumined, until, by strange excitement stirred, his mind had longed for dissolution, so it might bring knowledge for which his spirit was athirst. Vain desire. Vain as meanwhile his query, *de mortuis*,—

“ — Where are ye gone ? . . .  
Where are ye ? Must your kindred spirits sleep  
For many a thousand years, till by the trump  
Roused to new being ? . . . This is too hard  
For mortals to unravel, nor has He  
Vouchsafed a clue to man, Who bade us trust

To Him our weakness, and we shall wake up  
After His likeness, and be satisfied."

The passing in one moment from time to eternity, the becoming in that instant a disembodied spirit, a "naked unclothed soul launched on an unknown scene, and with none of the instruments heretofore employed for the ingathering of knowledge, or the communication of thought,"—no one, says Henry Melvill, ever marked, so far as it can be marked, this noiseless flitting away of man's immortal part, without experiencing a painful inquisitiveness as to what had become of that part, as to where it was, as to what it saw, as to what it heard. But in vain this straining of the mind, this intenseness of the gaze. The unexplored region of separation is to us, living, an infinite desert which no thought can traverse; though when we come to die, it will be found what the eloquent preacher calls only a line, like that which the last wave leaves on the sandy shore.

Wordsworth's Solitary had to bewail the swift conveyance from earth of that blooming girl who was the light of his home,—conveyed

"From us to inaccessible worlds, to regions  
Where height, or depth, admits not the approach  
Of living man, though longing to pursue."

Later in his impassioned narrative the lonely sufferer tells how, after other and final and to him fatal losses, he called on dreams and visions to disclose that which is veiled from waking thoughts; how he

conjured eternity, as men constrain a ghost to appear and answer;

“——to the grave I spake  
Imploringly ;—looked up, and asked the Heavens  
If angels traversed their cerulean floors,  
If fixed or wandering stars could tidings yield  
Of the departed spirit—what abode  
It occupies—what consciousness retains  
Of former loves and interests.”

Mr. James Martineau somewhere speaks of those human affections which, since the fathers fell asleep, have been “plaintiffs against death,” and stood on the brink of the invisible, crying in vain over its abyss for tidings of the treasures it conceals. Robert Blair’s invocation, “Tell us, ye dead,” etc., is echoed by his greater, if less Christian, namesake, Burns, in his correspondence, with the avowal, “A thousand times have I made this apostrophe to the departed sons of men, but not one of them has ever thought fit to answer the question. ‘O that some courteous ghost would blab it out!’ But it cannot be. You and I, my friend,\* must make the experiment by ourselves and for ourselves.” Byron’s *Manfred*

“—— can call the dead,  
And ask them what it is we dread to be ;”

but that is all poetical licence, and though, like Glendower, he can call, will the spirits come when he doth call for them? Readers of Mr. Woolner’s

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\* To Mrs. Dunlop, 22 August, 1792.

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*My Beautiful Lady* will remember that passage in the Introduction, beginning, "I know thy earthly form is mouldering in its tomb; but yet, O love! thy spirit must dwell somewhere in this waste of worlds . . . .

"And wilt thou not vouchsafe one beaming look  
To ease a lonely heart that beats in pain  
For loss of thee, and only thee, O Love?"

Nor can those who keep up an acquaintance with contemporary minstrelsy of mark and likelihood, very well fail to recall the song of the miller's old mother in Miss Ingelow's domestic idyll :

"Oh, my lost love, and my own, own love,  
And my love that loved me so!  
Is there never a chink in the world above  
Where they listen for words from below?"

But what every reader will be likeliest to remember, after all, and before all, is a New Testament incident that has made many a heart wistful. "Where wert thou, brother, those four days?" is the hypothetical query put to Lazarus by the sisters of Bethany, and there lives no record of reply from him who had left his charnel-cave, and home to Mary's house returned.

"Behold a man raised up by Christ !  
The rest remaineth unreveal'd ;  
He told it not ; or something seal'd  
The lips of that Evangelist."

## XXI.

### *ALL GONE, THE OLD FAMILIAR FACES.*

WELL might Johnson say, in the *Rambler*, that to a man who has survived all the companions of his youth, all who have shared in his pleasures and his cares, have been engaged in the same events, and filled their minds with the same conceptions, this full-peopled world is a dismal solitude. It is when

“All, all are gone, the old familiar faces,”

that the sense of desolation becomes positive in privation. Those friends it is we mainly miss who have been bound to us not so much by similarity of taste and pursuits, as by household ties and the associations of dear homely daily life. *Omnies composui.* “My lovers and friends hast Thou put away from me, and hid mine acquaintance out of my sight.” The blessed household faces are blurred with the “dishonours of the grave.” Dear but strange and sad at midnight are the memories

“Of voices—whereof but to speak  
Makes mine own all sunk and weak;  
Of smiles the thought of which is sweeping  
All my soul to floods of weeping;  
Of looks, whose absence fain would weigh  
My looks to the ground for aye.”

In serener mood Scott offers the solacing thought, that, when musing on companions gone we doubly feel ourselves alone, something we yet may gain by the musing,—

“There is a pleasure in this pain:  
It soothes the love of lonely rest  
Deep in each gentle heart impress'd . . .  
Whispering a mingled sentiment  
‘Twixt resignation and content.”

As with the Lotos-eaters lending their hearts and spirits wholly to the influence of mild-minded melancholy;

“To muse and brood and live again in memory,  
With those old faces of our infancy  
Heap'd over with a mound of grass.”

*L'horizon devient sombre*: “Des gais amis le long rire a cessé. Combien là-bas déjà t'ont-ils devancé !”, In his old age the author of Gebir, pained by recurring anniversaries, exclaimed,

“O my lost friends ! why were ye once so dear ?  
And why were not ye fewer, O ye few ?  
Must winter, spring, and summer thus return,  
Commemorating some one torn away,  
Till half the months at last shall take, with me,  
Their names from those upon your scatter'd graves !”

His own birthday is the text for a like strain, in another metre. The return of it seems to ask him why he stays, stricken by Time and bowed by Woe :—

“Many were once the friends who came  
To wish me joy ; and there are some  
Who wish it now; but not the same ;  
They are whence friend can never come.”

So Byron, but without the plea of old age :—

“ I loved—but those I loved are gone ;  
 Had friends—my early friends are fled ;  
 How cheerless feels the heart alone,  
 When all its former hopes are dead !

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Give me again a faithful few,  
 In years and feelings still the same,” etc.

One of Arthur H. Clough’s Songs in Absence commemorates with all the yearning tenderness of retrospective exile the

“ Fields once I walked in, faces once I knew,  
 Familiar things so old my heart believed them true ;  
 These far, far back, behind me lie, before  
 The dark clouds mutter, and the deep seas roar,  
 And speak to them that ’neath and o’er them roam  
 No words of home.”

Like an inundation of the Indus is the course of time,—the simile is in *Kavanagh*: We look for the homes of our childhood, they are gone ; for the friends of our childhood, they are gone. *Amissos longo socios sermone requirimus*. “ Come back ! ” is the invocation of Prince Henry in the Golden Legend, when he cannot sleep, and his fervid brain calls up the vanished Past again,

“ Come back ! ye friends whose lives are ended,  
 Come back, with all that light attended  
 Which seemed to darken and decay  
 When ye arose and went away !

“ They come, the shapes of joy and woe,  
 The airy crowds of long ago . . . .

“They change the cloisters of the night  
Into a garden of delight;  
They make the dark and dreary hours  
Open and blossom into flowers.

“I would not sleep. I love to be  
Again in their fair company;  
But ere my lips can bid them stay,  
They pass and vanish quite away !”

Mrs. Schimmelpenninck when revisiting Great Malvern in the decline of life, described herself as feeling (if feeling can be compared to thinking) as she supposed Sir Christopher Wren did when he dug for the foundation of St. Paul’s, and found but a mound of cemeteries and sepultures, one below the other; the English, the Norman, the Danish, the Saxon, the Roman, the British—one city of the dead. She asked after her friends and acquaintances there of yore; but all, all were gone, the old familiar faces.

Washington Irving’s return to Europe in his fifty-ninth year was full of melancholy reflections and associations. He found himself continually retracing the scenes of past pleasures and friendships, and finding them vacant and desolate. He seemed to come upon the very footprints of old friends, which served but to remind him that those who made those footprints had passed away. In his seventieth year we find him writing to Miss Kennedy an account of a recent visit to Ogdensburg, once visited by him before, half a century since: “I sat down on the river bank, where we used to embark in our canoes, and

thought on the two lovely girls who used to navigate it with me, and the joyous party who used to cheer us from the shore. All had passed away—all were dead ! I was the sole survivor of that happy party ; and here I had returned, after a lapse of fifty years, to sit down and meditate on the mutability of all things, and to wonder that I was still alive." Hardly could Campbell's returning Exile of Erin feel more desolate, when he wailed his

"Where is the mother that look'd on my childhood ?  
And where is the bosom-friend, dearer than all ?"

Lamb's exclamation to the friend of his bosom, dearer than a brother, is, "Why wert not thou born in my father's dwelling ? so might we talk of the old familiar faces." The friend of our boyish sports, of our college studies, of our first schemes and successes, and joys and sorrows, is he, as Dr. Thomas Brown words it, "in whose converse the heart expands most readily, and with whom, in latest old age, we love to grow young again." In one of Johnson's letters to Boswell, written from Ashbourne in his sixty-eighth year, the Doctor records the death of his old Lichfield friend, Harry Jackson, with this comment : "It was a loss, and a loss not to be repaired, as he was one of the companions of my childhood. I hope we may long continue to gain friends ; but the friends which merit or usefulness can procure us are not able to supply the place of old acquaintance, with whom the days of youth may be retraced, and those images

revived which gave the earliest delight." In a later letter, to another friend, and upon another subject, Johnson declares the world to have few greater pleasures than that which two friends enjoy in tracing back, at some distant time, the transactions and events through which they have passed together; and he takes it to be one, and not the least, of an old man's miseries, that he cannot easily find a companion able to live with him over again the dead and gone past. At seventy-two he tells Mr. Hector they twain should now naturally cling to one another, both having outlived most of those who could pretend to rival them in each other's kindness. In their walk through life the Doctor and his old schoolfellow had dropped their companions, and must now pick up such as chance might offer them, or else travel on alone. Three years later we overhear Johnson assuring a friend that he looks upon every day to be lost in which he fails to make a new acquaintance. And at this time it was, in his seventy-fifth year, that he passed a few days at Birmingham, with the old schoolfellow last named, whom he strenuously urged to write down what he could recollect of their early associations, and transmit the record to him in London. Mr. Hector gladly complied; "for I could perceive," he says, "nothing gave him greater pleasure than calling to mind those days of our innocence." Johnson only received the reminiscences about a week before he died.

The re-union of severed members of a household, the re-meeting of two born in one father's dwelling,—and doth not a meeting like that almost make amends for all the long years they have been wandering away? So met, they'll talk of sunshine and of song, and summer days, when they were young, sweet childish days that were as long as twenty days are now. Like Mr. Tennyson's Psyche with her brother Florian, when she clung about him,

“—and betwixt them blossom'd up  
From out a common vein of memory  
Sweet household talk, and phrases of the hearth,  
And far allusion.”

Or again like Fanny Price, in Miss Austen's *Mansfield Park*, when making much of her brother William, with whom she could go over again all the evil and good of their earliest years, and retrace with the fondest recollection every former united pain and pleasure—an advantage this, a strengthener of love, in which “even the conjugal tie is beneath the fraternal.” For, children of the same family, the same blood, with the same first associations and habits, have some means of enjoyment in their power, which no subsequent connexions can supply; and it must be by a long and unnatural estrangement, as Miss Austen says, “by a divorce which no subsequent connexion can justify, if such precious remains of the earliest attachments are ever entirely outlived,” as in point of fact, ugly fact, too often they are. Regretting with

a deep-drawn *hélas!* the withdrawal of old friend after old friend, M. Alexis Dumesnil pathetically adds, “Le silence a commencé à se faire autour de moi. A qui donc parlerai-je, dans ma vieillesse, des heureux souvenirs du premier âge, des innocentes joies et des légers chagrins de l'enfance, d'une malice d'écolier ou d'une récréation turbulente ?” Madame de Maintenon in her old age used to complain how painful it is to live too long, so as to associate with strangers to one's cherished past, “avec des gens de qui l'on n'est pas connu, qui n'ont point été de la vie qu'on a menée autrefois, qui sont en un mot d'un autre siècle,” belong to another generation, and have the tastes, feelings, associations proper to another and newer age. If rare is the good fortune, it is rich as rare, of him who can say with the poet, of or to a congenial spirit,—

“Tis true I cannot talk with thee  
Of home and early ties,  
Of friends in childhood known to both,  
Or mutual memories;

“Yet every careless word we say,  
Out of some depth doth grow;  
Our spirits can look back to times  
More long than ‘long ago.’

“And childhood is a recent thing  
To what our hearts recall;  
I do not ask, ‘Why wert thou not  
Bred in my father's hall?’

“Nor am I vex'd we have no stores  
To earthly memory due;  
We cannot mutual joys revive,  
But then no sorrows too.”

It was in reference to the loss of one brother that Southey, writing to another and younger one, said : "There is now no human being left who can talk with me of old times,—not one who nursed me in infancy, or played with me in my father's house." It made his heart grow old before its time, he complained, when so many of its dearest feelings and recollections were thus cut off, never again to be shared with any one on earth. Writing to Mr. Wynn, from Keswick, on the same day, Southey reminds him, "When you were here, we were talking how time draws closer the natural ties. I have been very unfortunate in mine. There is now not one person left who can talk with me of my childhood," etc., as in the previous excerpt. At another time, and moved by another trouble, we find him saying "Few men have had more of these weanings of the heart from earth than have been dealt to me. All who were about my infancy are gone ; I have no friends left but those of my own making. All the faces that I first learnt to love have been taken away, and all prematurely." A full decade of years had past when he afterwards told the world in feeling verse,—

"The faces which I loved in infancy  
Are gone ; and bosom-friends of riper age,  
With whom I fondly talk'd of years to come,  
Summon'd before me to their heritage,  
Are in the better world, beyond the tomb."

Elsewhere again he compares his lot to the end of

the *Pilgrim's Progress*—one by one our friends go before us, and leave us at the side of the Great Water that we all must cross. So again, in yet another fragment of verse :

“ The most are gone ;  
And whoso yet survive of those who then  
Were in their summer season, on the tree  
Of life hang here and there like wintry leaves,  
Which the first breeze will from the bough bring down.”

No bosom friend of Charles Lamb's was better fitted than Robert Southey to feel with him line by line, line upon line, *every* line of his lament for the old familiar faces, of which all, all were gone. Playmates, companions, in the days of childhood, the merry school days ; laughing boon-fellows and bosom-cronies, all gone. Ghost-like he paced round the haunts of his childhood : earth seemed a desert he was bound to traverse, seeking to find the old familiar faces. Some had died, some left him, some been taken from him, but all were departed ; “ all, all are gone, the old familiar faces.” Lamb's love for these was his most characteristic passion. Never mind how old the face was, so that it was familiar. The older, the better. Familiarity bred the very opposite of contempt. Wrinkles and furrows were at a premium with him, provided only he had known the virgin soil ere yet time had begun to break it up and harrow it. He could almost cry, Speed the plough! in such cases. Amid a generation that

knew not Charles Lamb as Charles ("Nobody calls me Charles now!"), he was as ill at ease as the borough paupers *inter se* described by Crabbe :

"They talk indeed, but who can choose a friend  
 Or seek companions at their journey's end ?  
 Here are not those whom they, when infants, knew ;  
 Who with like fortune up to manhood grew ;  
 Who with like troubles at old age arrived ;  
 Who, like themselves, the joy of life survived ;  
 Whom time and custom so familiar made,  
 That looks the meaning in the mind convey'd :  
 But here to strangers, words nor looks impart  
 The various movements of the suffering heart ;  
 Nor will that heart with those alliance own,  
 To whom its views and hopes are all unknown."

Frederick the Great lived long enough to account his lot an exceptional one in outliving all his bosom friends and familiar acquaintance of lang syne : "Une chose qui n'est presque arrivée qu'à moi est que j'ai perdu tous mes amis de cœur et mes anciennes connaissances ; ce sont des plaies dont le cœur saigne longtemps, que la philosophie apaise, mais que sa main ne saurait guérir." Age has its many pains and penalties, and this one of the heaviest : *hac pena data diù viventibus.*

" They are all,  
 All gone ;—with whom how fondly once I loved  
 To seek this height and wander thro' yon dells—  
 None left upon the earth ; all laid beneath ;—  
 Death, like a kindly shepherd, came to them,  
 While they were straying in the vale of years,  
 And took them to their fold, and bade them sleep ;

But he hath been to me a jealous master;  
Hovering for years around me; with approach  
Enfeebling, but forbearing still to touch,  
He tempts with outstretched hand, and disappoints."

True friends are said by Fénelon to be the cause of our deepest grief and bitterness, in respect of losing them; insomuch that his wish would be that all real and hearty friends, *tous les bons amis*, might come to an arrangement or enter into an agreement, *s'entendent*, to die together the self-same day, *pour mourir ensemble le même jour*. When the Irish Melodist remembers all the friends, so linked together, that he has seen fall around him, like leaves in winter, his feeling is as of one who treads alone some banquet hall deserted, "whose lights are fled, whose garlands dead, and all but he departed." Another strain of his is pitched in the same plaintive minor, where his theme is, that alone in crowds to wander on, and feel that all the charm is gone which voices dear and eyes beloved shed round us once, where'er we roved,—this, this the doom must be of all who've loved, and lived to see the few bright things they thought would stay for ever near them, die away. George Herbert's *Home* cry is,—

"What have I left, that I should stay and groan?  
The most of me to heaven is fled:  
My thoughts and joys are all pack'd up and gone,  
And for their old acquaintance plead."

## XXII.

### *EVER REMEMBERED, NEVER NAMED.*

FATHER NEWMAN, in one of his sermons, says of those who are gone from us, followed by the vehement grief of tears, and the long sorrow of aching hearts, that we talk about them henceforth as if they were persons we do not know; that we talk about them as third persons; whereas they used to be always with us, and every other thought which was within us was shared by them. "Or perhaps, if our grief is too deep, we do not mention their names at all." As in the *Fourfold Aspect of Life*:

"Household names, which used to flutter  
Through your laughter unawares,—  
God's Divine name ye could utter  
With less trembling in your prayers!"

But the poetess in another poem speaks of Cowper,—and she is writing on and from Cowper's grave—as ever by the wise and good to be

"Named softly as the household name of one whom God hath taken."

It is observable of Cowper himself, that when certified of the death of Mrs. Unwin he uttered a single expression of passionate grief, and that, from that time forward, he never again so much as mentioned her name. Shakspeare makes Brutus impa-

tient of having Portia named to him, after loss of her who to him was dear as the ruddy drops that coursed to his sad heart: "Speak no more of her," he bids Cassius; and when, after an interval, Cassius cannot refrain from the sombre musing, "Portia, art thou gone?" again comes the widower's bidding, "No more, I pray you." So with Leontes, when Paulina reminds him of Mamillus:

"—Pr'y thee, no more; thou know'st  
He dies to me again when talk'd of."

When Byron was told of the death of his Allegra, his mortal paleness, fixed look, and motionless attitude for an hour afterwards, made the teller fear for his reason; but on the morrow he said calmly, "It is God's will—let us mention it no more." And from that hour he would never pronounce her name. The biographer of Washington Irving takes it as an indication of the depth of his feeling with regard to the loss of his betrothed, Matilda Hoffmann, that even to his most intimate friends he never mentioned her name, nor did any of his relatives ever venture in his presence to introduce it.\* The late Bishop

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\* One only instance is on record in which the name was "obtruded" on him, and that was by her father, at his own house, and thirty years after her death. A grand-daughter in hunting out some old music from the drawer, brought with it accidentally a piece of embroidery. "Washington," said Mr. Hoffmann, picking up the faded relic, "this is a piece of poor Matilda's workmanship." The effect is said to have been

Lonsdale, who is described by his son-in-law as indifferent and careless about the conventional demonstrations of grief, and sometimes laughing at their extravagance, was remarkably silent about his own sorrow when it was deep and severe: "He very seldom, indeed, spoke of his wife after her death," though he would sometimes quote some saying of hers, and he had her last letter to him in his pocket-book when he died fifteen years afterwards. Ever in remembrance, though so seldom named. Few, indeed, must be the fondest of wives, perhaps the fonder the fewer, who could take up and apply the lines in Shakspeare's sonnet which bid a survivor mourn no longer than while the bell is sounding :

" Nay, if you read this line, remember not  
The hand that writ it ; for I love you so  
That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,  
If thinking on me then should make you woe."

Gibbon admired in widowed Madame de Severy her love of talking of her irreparable loss, and her descanting with such pleasure on the virtues of her husband : "Her words are interrupted with tears, but those tears are her best relief ; and her tender feelings will insensibly subside into the affectionate remembrance." "Let's talk of him," says Blancaflor in Roscoe's *Eliduke, Count of Yveloc* :

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electric on Mr. Irving, who had been conversing in the sprightliest mood up to this time, but now sank at once into utter silence, and in a few moments got up and left the house.

“They are poor comforters  
That snatch away the memory of the dead,  
Our sweet most healing salve.”

We rarely understand how to treat our own sorrow or that of others, Mr. Trollope observes, referring to converse about the dead as being conventionally a forbidden topic: “When those we love are dead, our friends dread to mention them, though to us who are bereaved no subject would be so pleasant as their names.” But idiosyncrasy will assert itself, with a difference, in these matters. Some, as Professor Wilson says, eager for the world’s sympathy, love to talk about the loved objects lost, while others—and he avowedly was of the number—put an interdiction on that theme: “Names never escape our lips, nor others’ lips in our presence. . . . We force our thoughts into other channels than such as lead that way, till the habit of silence is acquired to ourselves, and to all about us, and is continued when the sensitiveness has subsided.” He would treat the heart as an inner sanctuary, where the beloved object is enshrined, nor must its precincts be trod by any foot: it is private—for silence and for the mourner; whereas to others it is as a fair and open chapel, where all who approach are welcomed as pilgrims, and the mourner feels his sorrow sanctified by human sympathies.

It is a recorded characteristic of Mr. Charles Reade’s Doctor Sampson, a “character” in-and-in, out-and-

out, that he seldom mentioned a dead friend or relation ; and that if others forced the dreary topic on him, they could never hold him to it ; "he was away directly to something pleasant or useful, like a grasshopper skipping off a grave into the green grass." The author of *Reveries of a Bachelor* wonders at those who can talk at table, and in their gossip, of dead friends ; it passes his comprehension how they can do it : for himself, when the grave has closed its gates on the faces of those he loves, his tongue becomes silent, however busy his mournful thought may be : he cannot name their names, it shocks him to hear them named ; to him it seems like tearing open half-healed wounds, and disturbing with harsh worldly noise the sweet sleep of death. Horace Walpole says that a death is only to be felt, never to be talked over by those it touches. There is a mode of grief which is chargeable with shrinking selfishly from all that revives the remembrance of the dead ; and the selfishness, if not the grief, is well pronounced in the Duchess of Maine, who, as soon as ever she lost a friend she "could not live without," showed absolute indifference and fostered complete oblivion *à leur regard*. Once let them be dead and gone, and "puis la toile fut baissée, et l'on n'en parla plus." A representative of quite another kind of silence we have in the father of Marshal Ney, who tenderly loved, and, in the French sense, even "adored" his son, but who, though surviving that son some dozen

years, never again pronounced his name, after the catastrophe of 1815. Frenchmen generally, however, and Frenchwomen more particularly, may be supposed to sympathize with the dying injunction of General d'Arblay to his wife (Fanny Burney that had been)—“Parle de moi. Parle de moi *souvent*. Surtout à Alexandre,” their only son—“qu'il ne m'oublie pas.” And “Je ne parlerai pas d'autre chose,” was Madame d'Arblay's reassuring reply. We read in the closing chapter of *The Virginians* that when that other General died (calm, and full of years, and glad to depart), Hetty talked of him constantly still, as though he were alive ; recalled his merry sayings, his gentle, kind ways with his children, and sat cheerfully looking up to the slab in church which recorded his name and some of his virtues, and for once told no lies. The good priest in Wordsworth's *Brothers*, instructs the visitor of his little churchyard, that with the primitive simple folk of that region there is no need of names and epitaphs, for,

“We talk about the dead by our firesides.”

Three days after the death of Lady Scott we find Sir Walter thus writing in his diary, of himself and his daughter Anne in their bereavement : “We speak freely of her whom we have lost, and mix her name in our ordinary conversation. This is the rule of nature. All primitive people speak of their dead, and I think virtuously and wisely.” He deems the

idea of blotting the names of those who are gone, out of the language and familiar discourse of those to whom they were dearest, to be one of the rules of ultra-civilization, which, in so many instances, strangle natural feeling by way of avoiding a painful sensation. The Highlanders, he remarks, speak of their dead children as freely as of living members of the family — “how poor Colin or Robert would have acted in such or such a situation.” It is, he concludes, a generous and manly tone of feeling ; and so far as it might be adopted without affectation or contravening the general habits of society, Sir Walter himself reckoned on observing it. In his *Fair Maid of Perth* he dilates with obvious interest on this topic, remarking on the usual aversion to speak or think of those who have been beloved and lost, as less known to “this grave and enthusiastic race,” the Scottish Highlanders, than it is to others ; they, appear to regard the separation of friends by death as something less absolute and complete than it is generally esteemed in other countries, and converse of the dear connections who have gone to the grave before them, as if they were started upon a long journey to be soon followed by themselves. The aboriginal Australian in Mr. Chauncy Hare Townshend’s poems is made to exclaim, on the other hand,

“ Oh, how we reverence the dead !  
How deep within us dwells the flame  
Of love for those who earth have fled ;  
We will not name their very name !

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This never came into the thought  
Of those who love and reverence nought."

But love and reverence have ways of approving themselves divers and diverse. Simple, homely, homelike affection often asks to be had in remembrance with as much of homelike simplicity as in the old daily life; and it is responded to in the self-same spirit by those who remain. Master Humphrey expressly desires, as a last wish, that his old friends will make him the frequent subject of their conversation, after he is gone—not, however, speaking of him with an air of gloom or restraint, but frankly, and as of one whom they still love, and hope to meet again. For many years after the loss of his wife, Mr. Patrick Fraser Tytler, the historian of Scotland, made it his practice, at short intervals of time, to show to his children their mother's portrait (which he always kept veiled in his study), and to discourse to them of her goodness, patience, beauty. He would question them severally as to what they remembered of her, would recall incidents of her last illness, and repeat texts or lines which she loved; and of all things it seemed to be his main desire to dissociate their minds from everything like gloom or dread in their thoughts of her. Southey, with a heart to the full as capacious, and with instincts of attachment at least as deep and abiding, was reticent about those he had loved and lost, but loved still, and would love to the end. Referring to one such loss he says,

“And seldom hath my tongue pronounced her name  
Since she was summon’d to a happier sphere.”

In a letter he speaks of his wife and himself, after sore bereavement, “always thinking of what we never speak of.” And thirty years later he ends a letter in which he touches on another vacancy in his home circle, with the words, “But these are things of which I never speak, and seldom dare to touch upon.” Whether or not he could envy, it seems to have scarcely been in him to emulate, the frame of mind indicated in the verse, *mutatis mutandis*,—

“He often told me about his dead,  
With chasteñ’d voice, but unclouded brow,  
As though from some holy book he read,  
Whose writer had grown more holy now.”

But he might himself have written that anonymous little elegiac poem, the simple thought in which comes home to every home, if only that home has ever been broken in upon by bereavement,—

“That name! how often every day  
We spake it and we heard;  
It was to us, 'mid tasks or play,  
A common household word.

“'Tis breathèd yet, that name—but oh,  
How solemn now the sound!  
One of the sanctities which throw  
Such awe our homes around.”

## XXIII.

### *THE LOOKS OF THE LAST SLEEP.*

SIR Thomas Browne in the *Religio Medici* speaks of it as "the very disgrace and ignominy of our natures, that in a moment can so disfigure us, that our nearest friends, wife, and children, stand afraid, and start at us." But sometimes the reluctance to gaze on the dead is to spare oneself grief, and to avoid a last association so distressful, and a last impression that might be only too vivid, exclusive, and abiding. Shakspeare's King Henry VI. says in reference to the corpse of his uncle, the good Duke Humphrey,—

"And to survey his dead and earthly image,  
What were it but to make my sorrow greater?"

The bereaved man in Mrs. Browning's poem of the *Exile's Return* protests,—

"I could not bear to look upon  
That mound of funeral clay,  
Where one sweet voice is silence,—one  
Æthereal brow decay,  
Where all thy mortal I might see,  
But never thee."

In *The Portrait* of another poet, the narrator tells how, as he stretched his hand he held his breath, and turned as he drew the curtains apart: "I dared

not look on the face of death." Burke used keenly to lament that he went to see his son after death, as the dead face so impressed his imagination that he could not retrace in his memory the features and air of his living Richard. Moore records in his Diary the great relief he felt when both mother and sister urged him not to take a last look at his dying or dead father, "as I would not for worlds have the sweet impression he left upon my mind when I last saw him exchanged for one which would haunt me, I know, dreadfully through the remainder of my life. It was Bessy's last wish that I should not arrive in time to see him alive, and her earnest request that I should not look on him afterwards. She knows how it would affect me." Miss Cornelia Knight alleges the encouragement she gave to the young Princess Charlotte's wish to go and see the Duchess of Brunswick, her grandmother, after her death, feeling that she had neglected her for the last month or two: the "lady companion" applauded the design as proceeding from the best of motives, "and I considered that royal personages are in general less prepared for the troubles of this life, because they are spared almost all painful and disagreeable scenes." But ladies of title, Miss Knight's superiors in influence as in rank, overruled the design, and persuaded the princess not to visit the dead. Some score of pages later in the Autobiography Miss Knight has to chronicle the death of

her royal pupil's faithful attendant, Mrs. Gagarin, than whom she might be said to have known no other mother ; "and her fortitude, as well as tenderness, on this occasion, showed itself in every possible way, to the great honour of her heart and head. . . . Princess Charlotte saw her after she was dead ; it was the first corpse she had ever seen"—but that was no fault of hers, or of Miss Cornelia Knight's. Frederick Perthes, writes to a bereaved father of a family, "You were right not to keep your other children away from the death-bed and the coffin. To talk children into sadness is vain ; but we may not too anxiously keep them from the view of realities : they should early learn to look the lot of man in the face, and they can bear it." His renowned contemporary Schleiermacher, on the other hand, in one of his letters, declares the sight of a corpse and the survey of the dead envelope of the departed spirit, to be to him too painful ; he found something very shocking to the feelings in it, without either joy or consolation to be derived from it. Lamartine treats as a problem incapable of solution, which ministers better to the consolation of the survivor and to veneration for the departed—the gazing, or the not gazing, on the remains ? To look or not to look, that is the question. He pictures the hesitating steps of the agitated visitor to the room whose one occupant is a corpse ; the approach and retreat by

turns, with now hurried and now faltering gait, towards or away from that bed, where a white coverlet half displays and half conceals the outline of the recumbent form. "A terrible struggle arises in your breast. The adored countenance is free from the fold of the winding-sheet ; you may raise the coverlet, and may gaze on that countenance for the last time." Whether to look on it, then, such as death has left it, or to press a kiss on that forehead through the snowy covering, and never see those vanished features more, save in memory, with the colour, the look, and the expression, which they wore in life ? Lamartine professed to feel but too well how differently the problem may be stated, and how differently it may be solved. In his own case, instinct, he says, had ever prevailed over reason. He longed to gaze, and he did gaze. And the tender and pious remembrance which he sought to impress on his mind was not altered by his doing so ; but the memory of the animated and living features, blending in his thoughts with the memory of the same features motionless, and, as it were, sculptured in marble by the hand of death, imparted to the beloved object something of the fire of life and the unchangeableness of immortality.

Frederick Schlegel kindles as he describes, in his *Philosophy of Language*, the touching trace left on the countenance by a calm and beautiful death ; a sweet smile like that of a sleeping child, lingering

on the well-known face, but the sweetness mingled with a slight, perhaps scarcely perceptible, token of previous suffering; and he is satisfied that whoever has once seen some dear friend or acquaintance so die, or beheld the beloved countenance after such a death, will assuredly cherish for ever the remembrance of this soothing expression. "It is pleasant to see death without its terrors," wrote Hannah More, fresh from the loss of her elder sister: "We visit the cold remains twenty times a day, and I am dividing my morning between the contemplation of her serene countenance, and reading my favourite Baxter's *Saints' Rest*." The narrator of *Wuthering Heights* dilates on the smooth brow, the tranquil lids, the smile on the dead lips, of Catherine Linton, and adds, "And I partook of the infinite calm in which she lay: my mind was never in a holier frame than while I gazed on that untroubled image of divine rest.—I don't know if it be a peculiarity in me, but I am seldom otherwise than happy whilst watching in the chamber of death. . . . I see a repose that neither earth nor hell can break." A reluctance to confuse the remembrance of a living face with the inevitable characteristics of mortality, is, on the other hand, decisive with some mourners against looking ever again on the face of the dead. Sister Jane, in one of Hook's Gurney stories, owns to an unwillingness to risk this sort of last and too abiding, too exclusive impression: "I should

like to remember my dear brother as he *was* when alive ; then we may fancy him absent and away, and yet to return to us—but if we see him dead, the recollection of him so will always last.” Miss Tytler, relating her father’s anxiety to banish everything like gloom or dread from the thoughts of his children about their dead mother, surmises that perhaps for this reason it was that they were not taken to look upon her after death, that they might remember her still lovely, as they had last seen her, and might dwell on her smile, her blessing, and the sweet spring flowers (auriculas) she gave them, on their last visit to her, rather than on the quiet gloom which is inseparable from the chamber of death.

John Sterling’s musings, among his Hymns of a Hermit, seemingly incline to this line of thought :—

“ Time more than earthly o’er this hour prevails,  
While thus I stand beside the newly-dead ;  
My heart is raised in awe, in terror quails  
Before these relics, whence the life is fled.

“ That face, so well-beloved, is senseless now,  
And lies a shrunken mass of common clay ;  
No more shall thought inspire the pulseless brow,  
Or laughter round the mouth keep holiday.

“ In vain affection yearns to own as man  
This clod turn’d over by the plough of death ;  
The sharpen’d nose, the frozen eyes we scan,  
And wondering think the heap had human breath.”

Grant but, however, the ineffable calm and the

inexpressible smile, which have at once soothed and fascinated so many else desolate and almost despairing gazers, and which of them would have missed a sight, a study, of those features and of that expression, for any price that could be named? "They say that thou wert lovely on thy bier," a sonnet of William Sidney Walker commences,—

" More lovely than in life ; that, when the thrall  
Of earth was loosed, it seemed as tho' a pall  
Of years were lifted, and thou didst appear  
Such as of old amidst thy home's calm sphere  
Thou sat'st, a kindly Presence, felt by all  
In joy or grief, from morn to evening fall,  
The peaceful Genius of that mansion dear,  
—Was it the craft of all-pervading Love  
That wrought this marvel ? or is Death indeed  
A mighty Master, gifted from above  
With alchemy divine, to wounded hearts  
Minist'ring thus, by quaint and subtle arts,  
Strange comfort, whereon after-thought may feed ?"

Falk relates that when Goethe heard of his having looked upon Wieland in death, and thereby procured himself a miserable evening and worse night, he vehemently reproved him for it. "Why," said he, "should I suffer the delightful impression of the features of my friend to be obliterated by the sight of a disfigured mask?" It was like Goethe that he carefully, therefore, avoided seeing Schiller, Herder, and the Duchess Amalia, in the coffin. "I, for my part, desire to retain in my memory a picture of my departed friends more full of soul

than the mere mask can afford me." In the corpse we love, it is the *likeness* we see, George Eliot observes; it is the likeness, which makes itself felt the more keenly because something else was, and is not. De Quincey has a description of a maiden in her coffin, with snowdrops and crocuses laid upon her innocent bosom, and roses of that sort which the season allowed, over her person: these and other lovely symbols of youth, of springtime, and of resurrection, caught the spectator's eye for the first moment, but in the next it fell upon her face—and there, the instant impression was, what a change, what a transfiguration! Still, indeed, there was the same innocent sweetness; still there was something of the same loveliness; the expression still remained; but for the features—all traces of flesh seemed to have vanished; mere outline of bony structure remained; mere pencillings and shadowings of what she once had been. This was indeed, he exclaimed, "dust to dust, ashes to ashes!" Michelet's description of Gabrielle in death, the Gabrielle of Henri Quatre, is of "la plus belle personne de France devenue tout à coup hideuse, effroyable, les yeux tournés, le cou tors et retourné sur l'épaule." *Hic est manus Dei*, were the significant words of the physician when he looked on that "cruel contraste d'une si éblouissante toilette" of white satin and red velvet and gold "avec cette face terrible qu'on eût crue morte d'un mois." Wilhelm von Humboldt

speaks of the soft and placid look of the countenance in death, even after a hard parting struggle, as observable in all dead bodies, and as even rising in some, as it were, into the beauty of a purified being. There may indeed, he admits, be instances of an opposite kind, in which the expression of passions, or of frightful sufferings, is not extinguished even by death. History relates of Catiline, whose body was found far in advance of the line of battle, among the corpses of the enemy, that the expression of his face still corresponded to the passions which had animated him in life. Humboldt owns to having seen some such cases on the battle fields of 1813 and 1815, but far more frequently he then and there noted in the traits of the dead a fulness of noble calm. This beautifying effect of death he asserts to be the privilege of man alone: in brute creatures it is quite otherwise; the most beautiful spirited horse, when lying dead on the field of battle, looks but an ugly and revolting object.

It is only here and there in books or in life that we come across distinct exceptions to the law of tranquil repose on the face of the dead. The late Mr. Baron Alderson was shocked at the aspect of his father when he "went to see the body"—and he called it an awful sight, that of the "utter clay of death," all that is worth having, gone, and what remains being well called "our vile bodies," for "very vile they do become indeed." He deemed

it a mere poetical fiction to talk of the beauty or the calm of death: to him there was avowedly neither truth or reality in such an idea. Chateaubriand's first sight of a dead body was that of a canon of St. Malo—his countenance distorted by the last convulsions; and the gazer's reflections were to this effect: Death is lovely, is our friend, but is not to be recognized as such, because seen under a mask, and this mask terrifies us. Haply, had he seen the canon's face some hours later, the distortion might have been exchanged for perfect peace of expression, as with the face of the duellist commemorated in Hawthorne's Note-book, who, with a most savage expression of countenance, had fired after the adversary's bullet reached his heart, and whose face for a while looked "as if he were already in the infernal regions; but afterwards it assumed an angelic calmness and repose." In contrast with Chateaubriand's first sight of death take Hazlitt's, who, as a middle-aged man, professed in one of his essays to have never seen death but once, years before, and that was in an infant. He describes the look as calm and placid, the face as fair and firm: it was as if a waxen image had been laid out in the coffin, an image of life. No breath moved the lips, no pulse stirred, no sight or sound would enter those eyes or ears more. "While I looked at it, I saw no pain was there; it seemed to smile at the short pang of life which was over." What the

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features of his white-veiled white-faced Beatrice seemed to Dante to say, was, "Now do I behold the beginning of peace," or as Mr. Theodore Martin renders the lines in the *Vita Nuova*,—

" And on her face was perfect calm expressed,  
That seemed as though it said, ' I am at rest !'"

With which passage the same refined critic and accomplished translator compares Petrarch's description of Laura, as she lay dead :

" Not pale, but whiter than the snow ; she lay  
Like one unto her rest fatigued away.  
It seemed as though her spirit, ere it fled,  
Upon her sweet and gracious eyes had shed  
A gentle slumber, a peculiar grace,—  
Death showed so lovely in her lovely face."

The elder Hood comments on the frequency with which gazers on the rigid marble features of the departed must have been struck by a startling likeness to some branch of consanguinity, more or less remote, thus proving, by a resemblance never recognizable during life, the fidelity of the family mould. Attenuated, perhaps, by disease, he remarks, and further sharpened by the contractions of the flesh and muscles after death, the features assume an expression sometimes entirely different from that of the same countenance when living, and the spectator becomes unexpectedly aware, that former dissimilarities in physiognomy arose merely from the variances of flesh and fibre. "The mortal change

moreover sometimes reduces the disparities of age, making the old apparently younger, and the young older—so that the father and son, mother and daughter, appear in each other's likeness with an identity perfectly astounding to the beholder." The laureate takes note of this fact in his *In Memoriam* A. H. H., where the simile occurs,—

"As sometimes in a dead man's face,  
To those that watch it more and more,  
A likeness hardly seen before  
Comes out—to some one of his race."

Who has not, asks a master of critical æsthetics, observed with awe the forgotten resemblances, the new expression, the strange refinement and what might almost be called glorification, which the calm of death develops in the lineaments of the departed—when human passion is stilled for ever, and, as the past and actual fades away, the possible and future dawns upon the spectator? Lord Houghton's *Requiescat in Pace* is a heartfelt study in the physiognomy of death :

"We have watched him to the last ;  
We have seen the dreaded king  
Smile pacific as he past  
By that couch of suffering :  
Wrinkles of aggressive years,  
Channels of unwitnessed tears,  
Furrows on the anxious brow,  
All are smooth as childhood's now !  
Death, as seen by men in dreams,  
Something stern and cruel seems—

But his face is not the same,  
When he comes into the room,  
Takes the hand and names the name,  
Seals the eyes with tender gloom."

In Bishop Blomfield's case, no sooner, his son bears record, was the death-struggle over, than his features seemed to regain the early beauty of which age and sickness had deprived them; his fine forehead, so often lately contracted with pain, lay smooth and unwrinkled as an infant's; all appearance of paralysis had passed away; and the lifeless face, in its placid composure, seemed in a moment to have lost twenty years of its age. Dr. Channing wrote of his mother, whose singular directness gave some appearance of hardness to her character, which time softened down, that an improvement seemed going on in her inner life not unlike that which death produced in her countenance—for at the moment of death "a beautiful serenity overspread her features, and her brow became almost as smooth as in youth." Thomas Hood sketched lovingly and longingly the face of his mother as she lay in her coffin; and of *him* his daughter writes, "When we looked on the calm happy face after death, free at last from the painful expression that had almost become habitual to it, we dared not regret the rest so long prayed for, and so hardly won." Of Mary Russell Mitford we read, that as she lay in her coffin, the features of the face, undisturbed by any trace of the cares, the vicis-

situdes, the exertions, the illness that she had undergone—still bearing their resemblance to the miniature painted of her in childhood, were overspread by an expression of intense repose and peace and charity such as no living face had ever known. She, in her day, had taken special note for herself and for others, of the aspect in death of that father to whom she had been all in all, and for whom she had suffered all things, without grudging or repining. She was pleased at a friend's request for permission to take a cast of the octogenarian doctor's face: "It is full of heavenly calm," she wrote to Mrs. Browning. And in a subsequent letter: "He looks with a heavenly composure, and almost with his own beautiful colour, the exquisite vermillion for which he was so famous, on his sweet serene countenance." Constantly noticed is the startling reappearance in the features, now cold and fixed, of the expression of many years since, lost for so long; and very strange the rapidity with which sometimes the change takes place. The marks of pain fade out, and with them, says one observer, the marks of age; and he illustrates this in the instance of an aged lady whose death he witnessed, who had borne sharp pain for many days, and to the very last, and whose features were tense and rigid with suffering, remaining so while life remained. "It was a beautiful sight to see the change that took place in the very instant of dissolution. The features, sharp for many days with

pain, in that instant recovered the old aspect of quietude which they had borne in health: the tense tight look was gone. You saw the signs of pain go out. You felt that all suffering was over." Not that the observer in question took this to be more than the mere working of physical law; but neither could he look on that changed countenance without remembering the words that tell of a better land where, as there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, so "neither shall there be any more pain."

It is related of Dr. Dove that, in the course of his professional practice, he turned to account the frequent opportunities it gave him of observing the stamp of family features at those times when it is most apparent: at birth, and in the last stage of decline,—for the elementary lines of the countenance come forth as distinctly in death as they were shaped from the first; and the author of *The Doctor* accounts it one of the most affecting circumstances connected with our decay and dissolution, that all traces of individual character in the face should thus disappear, the natural countenance alone remaining, and that in this respect the fresh corpse should resemble the new-born babe. The analysis of a face into its ancestral elements requires, according to Dr. Oliver W. Holmes, that it should be examined in the very earliest infancy, before it has lost that ancient and solemn look it brings with it out of the past eternity; and again in that brief space when Life, "the mighty

sculptor," has done his work, and Death, his "silent servant, lifts the veil and lets us look at the marble lines he has wrought so faithfully." In death, the death of the just, the Clothes-Philosopher of Weissnichtwo discerns, as the last perfection of a work of art, symbolic meanings: "In that divinely transfigured Sleep, as of Victory, resting over the beloved face which now knows thee no more, read (if thou canst for tears) the confluence of Time with Eternity, and some gleam of the latter peering through." He who hath bent him o'er the dead

"Ere the first day of death is fled,  
The first dark day of nothingness,  
The last of danger and distress,  
(Before Decay's effacing fingers  
Have swept the lines where beauty lingers),  
And mark'd the mild angelic air,  
The rapture of repose that's there,  
The fix'd, yet tender traits that streak  
The languor of the placid cheek, . . .  
Some moments, ay, one treacherous hour,  
He still might doubt the tyrant's power;  
So fair, so calm, so softly seal'd,  
The first, last look by death reveal'd."

The author of *Transformation* signalizes the wonderful beauty often to be observed in those who have recently gone through a great struggle, and won the peace that lies just on the other side; which beauty we see, he alleges, in a new mother's face, and we see it in the faces of the dead. Wordsworth's sonnet on the aspect of his dead sister commemorates the

"still rapture" of her mien, when *she* had become  
Death's bride :

" No trace of pain or languor could abide  
That change—age on thy brow was smoothed—thy cold  
Wan cheek at once was privileged to unfold  
A loveliness to living youth denied."

As with the form described by a prose pen that paints in words,—lying so still, quiet, and life-like, that one could scarcely credit the presence of death: "The expression of exhaustion, fatigue, and anxiety, which the face had latterly worn, had given place to one of tender rest, shaded by a sort of mysterious awe, as if the closed eyes were looking on unutterable things. The soul, though sunk below the horizon of existence, had thrown back a twilight upon the face, radiant as that of the evening heavens." Some may recall those lines of Keble's which tell how

" — the silent room  
Was veil'd in sadly-soothing gloom,  
And ready for her last abode  
The pale form like a lily show'd . . .  
The light from those soft-smiling eyes  
Had fleeted to its parent skies."

To the same poet we owe the line, "No smile is like the smile of death." Young assigns the smile to Death himself, in the passage which describes him loitering long by Narcissa's couch—

" — and, when detected, still was seen  
To smile; such peace has innocence in death!"

Ferdinand David's letter to Sir Sterndale Bennett, announcing the death of Mendelssohn, omits not to record that "the most gentle and placid smile overspread his features," *his*, who had been so recently in agonies of delirium, now making sounds as of musical instruments with his lips, as if the orchestra were weighing on his brain, now uttering cries of anguish, fearfully expressive and vaguely distressing. But calm was the last as with the sleeper in Dr. Holland's poem, who, having whispered at the last, "I'm weary, let me sleep," not once again breathed aught to mortal ears,

" — but slept and smiled,  
And slept and smiled again, till daylight passed."

So smiling slept, and sleeping smiled, Lamartine's Jocelyn :

" Son visage était calme et doux à regarder ;  
Ses traits pacifiés semblaient encor garder  
La douce impression d'extases commencées ;  
Il avait vu le ciel déjà dans ses pensées,  
Et le bonheur de l'âme en prenant son essor,  
Dans son divin sourire était visible encor."

After his reverent scrutiny of the aspect of Cardinal Borromeo in the cathedral of Milan, Talfourd wrote that on that skin of parchment yet lingers, or seems to linger, an expression of anxious benevolence, retaining still a trace of ineffable sweetness yet claimed from the grave; and in gazing on it with admiring sympathy, he felt assured that of all human qualities

gentleness is the most imperishable in death as in life; because gentleness has in it none of the elements of decay which blend with fierce passions and proud virtues. Here he felt that not only did the "ashes of the just" in moral power achieve a victory over the grave, but that the very dust itself bore witness to the angelic nature which possessed it living. Utter the contrast of impression produced on Hartley Coleridge by the aspect of Napoleon's corpse lying in state, with

"That cold unfeeling calm, that even now  
Blanks the dark meaning of that deep-lined brow,  
And from the loose lip half uncurls the sneer."

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Jukóvskii has this to say of Púshkin, in his animated account of the last hours of the Russian poet,—that never before the "supreme moment" which seemed to show him the face of death itself, divinely-mysterious, had he beheld upon the face of his friend an expression of such deep, majestic, such triumphant *thought*. The expression he takes to have been undoubtedly latent in the face before; but it was only displayed in all its purity then, when all earthly things had vanished from Púshkin's sight at the approach of death.

The expression on the face of Claudius, a few hours after his decease, was noted by his son-in-law Perthes as "very striking," in death as in life: "There is an air of weariness, as if he were satisfied

and pleased to have done with the earthly ; while the brow still retains the beauty and power, and the mouth all the fulness of affection, which characterized them in life." The daughter, Caroline, was an earnest observer of the faces of the departed with whom she had to do ; thus of her child Dorothea she writes : " She looks so peaceful that we must be so too." Twelve years later she recounts some serious hours passed at a friend's death-bed, and tells how at last she rejoiced to look upon the corpse as it lay in still repose, no longer constrained to cough, and tortured for want of air ; adding, " it is remarkable, and I have often observed, how high and clear death makes the forehead : even S.'s was very fine after death, though certainly it was not so in life." Caroline Perthes herself was soon afterwards thus described by her husband, the day after he lost her : " The body is inexpressibly beautiful, from the height of the forehead and the sweet loving smile that plays about the mouth." Jeffrey wrote of his dead wife, in 1804, that when he gazed upon her the moment after she had breathed her last, as she lay still and calm, with her bright eyes half closed, and her red lips half open, he thought he had never seen a countenance so lovely. " A statuary might have taken her for a model." To Mrs. Hemans herself was applied a passage from one of her own dirges : " They that have seen thy look in death, no more may fear to die." As in a similar description, there was diffused

over every lineament of the face that high celestial expression, that mingling of rapture and repose, which showed it was no earthly or temporary sleep, but the long sacred rest which "He giveth His beloved." Dr. James Hamilton describes the aspect of his mother as she lay in her coffin, "the most wonderful sight I ever saw, her features as full and firm, her complexion as fresh and with a hue as ruddy as in the highest health, and a calm reposing expression. It was quite beautiful. . . . It would seem that, in the wanderings of her last days, her thoughts were full of her early years, the bright scenes of her girlhood; and it looked as if the happy remembrance had given a younger as well as gladder expression to her countenance." Certainly he had seldom seen it so placid and free of care as when he took his last look of it that morning. In the *Suspiria de Profundis* Mr. de Quincey portrays one for whom, in her coffin, though no change can restore the ravages of the past, yet the expression has revived from her girlish years, the childlike aspect has revolved, and settled back upon her features, so that one might imagine that, in this sweet marble countenance was seen the very same upon which, so many years before, her mother's darkening eye had lingered to the last. It is a common thing, Mr. Dickens remarks, for the countenances of the dead, even in that fixed and rigid state, to subside into the long-forgotten expression of sleeping infancy, and settle into

the very look of early life; so calm, so peaceful do they grow again, that those who knew them in their happy childhood, kneel by the coffin's side in awe, and see the Angel even upon earth. In another of his books he makes the old prisoner of the Marshalsea say, "Unless my face, when I am dead, subsides into the long-departed look—they say such things happen, I don't know—my children will have never seen me." He falls asleep soon afterwards, and Little Dorrit watches him as the low firelight falls upon his face, and wonders if he looks now at all as he had looked when he was prosperous and happy; as he had so touched her by imagining that he might look once more in that awful time. Years later, that time comes, and Little Dorrit sees stealing over the cherished face upon the pillow, a deeper shadow than the shadow of the Marshalsea Wall; and "quietly, quietly, the face subsided into a far younger likeness of her own than she had ever seen under the grey hair, and sank to rest." All Madame Récamier's beauty, strange to say, returned after death. There were no traces of suffering—no wrinkles, or sign of age, to mar her features. Her expression was grave and angelic, we are told; she looked like a beautiful statue; the grace and sweetness of her last sleep seemed to be the ineffaceable impress of that spirit of tenderness and love which during life had acted like a talisman upon every heart. So Mr. Charles Reade describes one from whose pained

face, immediately after death, all the disfiguring effect of pain retired, and the happy soul seemed to have stamped its own celestial rapture on the countenance at the moment of leaving it; a rapture so wonderful, so divine, a more than mortal calm, irradiated the dead face. In the instance of Emilia Wyndham's mother, Mrs. Marsh pictures the daughter standing by, her eyes set upon the dreadful spectacle of mortality before her—the fierce passion which had agitated the last moments of the unhappy mother, still glaring with a sort of fixed expression of rage and despair upon the lifeless countenance. But when she saw it next the face had lost its anguished expression, and had resumed that sweet and heavenly composure which attends the first hours after departure, "before decay's effacing fingers have swept the lines where beauty lingers"—and it was to Emilia an inexpressible comfort to gaze upon it thus. "The calm and deep tranquillity, the indescribable solemnity which the presence of death impresses on the human soul, tranquillized hers. The storm was over—the strong battle of life had ceased—the anxious energy, the strife with evil, were at an end—sunk into that marble stillness, that dread quiet, which, ponder on it as we may, we never, never can comprehend." Richardson's Clarissa expires with "such a smile, such a charming serenity overspreading her sweet face at the instant, as seemed to manifest her eternal

happiness already begun”—and a subsequent epistle describes a later “view of the lovely corpse” by spectators all admiration of the “charming serenity of her noble aspect”—they “never saw death so lovely before: she looked as if in an easy slumber, her colour not having quite left her cheeks and lips.” As in James Grahame’s lines :

“ — those lips are closed;  
Yet all her loveliness is not yet flown;  
She smiled in death, and still her cold pale face  
Retains that smile; as when a waveless lake,  
In which the wintry stars all bright appear,  
Is sheeted by a nightly frost with ice,  
Still it reflects the face of heaven unchanged,  
Unruffled by the breeze or sweeping blast.”

Pope’s venerable mother, dead in her ninety-third year, so looked her last. Urging his friend Richardson, the painter, to come and transfer that look to canvas, her devoted son—for Pope was a devoted son—thanks God her death was easy, not costing her a groan, or even a sigh; and he adds, “There is yet upon her countenance such an expression of tranquillity, nay, almost of pleasure, that it is even amiable to behold it. It would afford the finest image of a saint expired, that ever painting drew; and it would be the greatest obligation which even that obliging art could ever bestow on a friend, if you could come and sketch it for me.” The ideal grandmother of Hans C. Andersen’s *In Sweden* lies within her coffin, wrapped in snow-white linen, with

every wrinkle smoothed out, and with a smile on her face, which is, even with these surroundings of mortality, winsome to all beholders. "Pour avoir tant aimé et servi Dieu durant sa vie," contemporary writers said of Anne of Brittany, "Dieu lui préservait sa beauté après sa mort." Dr. Chalmers writes of his aged mother, in 1827,—"I am now in frequent converse with her remains. That countenance that looked so ghastly in dying, has a peace and loveliness in death which is pleasing to look upon." With no such feelings Robert Southey gazed his last upon her that bare him: "The whole appearance was so much that of utter death, that the first feeling was as if there could have been no world for the dead;" which feeling was in him so very strong, that it required thought and reasoning for him to recover his former certainty, that as surely we must live hereafter, as all here is not the creation of folly or of chance.

What a change had come over the face of his slaughtered opponent since, only a few moments ago, Septimius, in Hawthorne's posthumous romance of immortality, had looked at that death-contorted countenance: "Now there was a high and sweet expression upon it of great joy and surprise, and yet a quietude diffused throughout, as if the peace being so very great was what had surprised him." The expression is likened to a light gleaming and glowing

within him. We are told how often Septimius, at a certain space of time after sunset, had looked westward and seen a radiance in the sky, the last light of the dead day, to which just a counterpart was to be seen now in the young man's face; and it was as if the youth were just at the gate of Heaven, which, swinging softly open, let the inconceivable glory of the blessed city shine upon his face, and kindle it up with gentle, undisturbing astonishment and purest joy. "It was an expression contrived by God's Providence to comfort, to overcome all the dark auguries that the physical ugliness of death inevitably creates, and to prove by the Divine glory on the face that the ugliness is a delusion." To Septimius it seemed as if the dead man himself showed his face out of the sky with Heaven's blessing on it, and bade the afflicted be of good cheer, and believe in immortality. Have not some of us so felt, and do we not cherish a very present memory of the feeling, as

" Dear as remember'd kisses after death"?

Mr. Fields well remembers the sadness of Hawthorne's face when he told him he had "felt obliged to look on the dead" wife of President Pierce. It was, he said, "like a carven image laid in its richly embossed enclosure, and there was a remote expression about it as if the whole had nothing to do with things present." John Galt somewhere commemorates that last and indescribable gleam of earthly beauty,

which remains for a few minutes after the spirit has departed, and seems as if it were the reflection of the ethereal guest hovering in contemplation over the dwelling it has for ever quitted. The Shepherd of the *Noctes* propounds it as "an impressive fizziological and sykological fack," that the faces "o' the most ferocious are a' placid in death." Consider well, one of *The Two Voices* bids the listener to both,

"His face that two hours since hath died:  
Wilt thou find passion, pain, or pride?

\* \* \* \* \*

"His palms are folded on his breast:  
There is no other thing express'd  
But long disquiet merged in rest.

"His lips are very mild and meek:  
Though one should smite him on the cheek,  
And on the mouth, he will not speak."

So wrote one who in after years, when *In Memoriam A. H. H.* was his theme, professed that he waged not any feud with Death for changes wrought on form or face, but for putting two lives so far apart they could not hear each other speak.

## XXIV.

### *THOUGHTS OF THE SLEEPLESS ON THEIR LAST SLEEP.*

**I**T has been said that every child who has seen a grave filled up, longs to know whether a sick friend contemplates that first night in those cold quarters, and whether the prospect excites any emotion. Surely,—comes a voice from a sick-room; we do contemplate it, frequently, and some of us eagerly. “In the dark night, we picture the whole scene, under every condition the imagination can originate.” By day, says Miss Martineau, we hold up before our eyes that most wonderful piece of our worldly wealth, our own right-hand; examine its curious texture and mechanism, and call up the image of its sure deadness and decay. And with what emotions? Each must answer for himself. “As for me, it is with mere curiosity, and without any concern about the lonely, cold grave. I doubt whether any one’s imagination rests there—whether there is ever any panic about the darkness and the worm of the narrow house.” Adverting to what he calls the “dim, inexpressible, causeless terrors” that come on the most prosperous of us, when we wake in the night, in the dark, Mr. Kingsley says, “I know a military officer of good repute, excellent courage, respectable fortune, and without one solitary anxiety in this world, who takes

his recreation in these sad, solitary hours, by thinking of *death*: by putting to himself that he must die some time or another, and trying to make out what the last, horrible hour will be like." The Ettrick Shepherd in the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, bears witness of himself, as regards speculations about his decease, and this sort of *post mortem* examination in general, that "Thochts like these will come fleein into my spirits during the nicht-watches, but they can find no resting-place for the soles of their feet, ony mair than the bits o' wearied sea-birds that will try to sit down on the riggin o' a ship at sea." Sometimes the thinker is uncertain whether he be sleeping or waking, or something between both. The actual dream of one's own death, or of oneself as dead, is Campbell's theme, in stanzas of which the second runs,—

" Sad regrets from past existence  
Came, like gales of chilling breath;  
Shadow'd in the forward distance  
Lay the land of Death.  
Now seeming more, now less remote,  
On that dim-seen shore, methought,  
I beheld two hands a space  
Slow unshroud a spectre's face;  
And my flesh's hair upstood,—  
'Twas my own similitude."

And *A Dream* of Owen Meredith's begins,—

" I had a quiet dream last night :  
For I dream'd that I was dead ;  
Wrapt around in my grave-clothes white,  
With my gravestone at my head."

The old-world adage, that having dreamed of oneself as dead, one will be free from care, is said to be still prevalent with some superstitious folk : *mortuus per somnum vacabis curis.*

The Old Bachelor in the Old Scottish Village, describes the softening and sinking of the spirit he was apt to feel in the stillness of night, and how he heard the beating of his heart as if he were afraid of something, he knew not what, just about to come out of the yawning stillness. "When I lie down, and compose myself on my bed, the fears of death creep over me." He speaks of the owl abroad, as not breaking, but only solemnizing the stillness. In Shakspeare,

" — the scritch-owl, scritchng loud,  
Puts the wretch, that lies in woe,  
In remembrance of a shroud."

Miss Broughton's apostrophe, "Oh, grave, sweet night ! how solemn you are ! type and figure of death !" is followed by this reflection, among others to the purpose, that in the night we think steadfastly of our departure, and "realize that it will be, that some day we shall surely get that letter signed with the sign manual of the Great King, the letter that bids us set our houses in order, bids us kiss tearful wife and little ones, bids us rise up and come away, for *He* needs us." One of Beethoven's letters to Frau von Streicher is made up of one little paragraph, but that a significant one : "I thought much of death during the past night ; but such thoughts are familiar to me by day

also." In this respect, the day and the night to him were both alike. Mr. Thackeray, in one of his miscellaneous essays, pictures himself one sleepless night, "in the course of half-a-dozen dark, wakeful hours," turning his thoughts to "that certain supreme night, that shall come at one time or other, when he who writes shall be stretched upon the last bed, prostrate in the last struggle, taking the last look of dear faces that have cheered us here, and lingering—one moment more—ere we part for the tremendous journey." What he did not foresee was that in his case there should be no such companionship and leave-taking at the last, but that his spirit should wing its flight with no dear faces near ; and that he should be found one Christmas morning dead and gone, in, or from, the now untenanted chamber.

Thus to Sir Launcelot spoke Queen Guenevere, in one poem of their Parting :

" — And oft, indeed, to me  
Lying whole hours awake in the dead nights  
The end seems near, as tho' the darkness knew  
The angel waiting there to call my soul  
Perchance before the house awakes."

## XXV.

### *'THE SUBLIME ATTRACTIONS OF THE GRAVE.'*

THE venerable sage of *The Excursion* corrects the despondency of the recluse, and bids him hope for a time when doubt shall be quelled and trouble chased away: with only such degree of sadness left as may support longings of pure desire, and strengthen love, rejoicing secretly

“In the sublime attractions of the grave.”

The recluse in question had long since, though in another spirit, felt the spell of those attractions, when, miserably bare, the one survivor of a once happy household, he wept and prayed for *his* dismissal, “day and night, compelled to hold communion with the grave, and face with pain the regions of eternity.” With pain, not with longings of pure desire and secret rejoicings.

Salathiel, with his spirit darkened by an eternal cloud, describes himself as loving loneliness and darkness, and during his miserable midnights communing with memories that he would not have exchanged for the brightest enjoyments of life. When the echo of the winds came round him, he welcomed the sad music in which the beloved voices revisited his soul:

“What was earth now to me but a tomb ? pomp—nay, comfort, would have been a mockery. I clung to the solitude and obscurity that gave me the picture of the grave.” The patriarch Job stands not all alone in his misery, but is in his way a representative man, when he would fain be where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest. He expressly speaks of those who long for death, but it cometh not, and who dig for it more than for hid treasures ; who rejoice exceedingly, and are right glad, when they can find the grave.

To Elaine, the overheard call of Death was “like a friend’s voice from a distant field approaching through the darkness ;” and thus she mixed her fancies with the glooms of evening and the moanings of the wind. And in those days she made a little song, and called her song, “ The Song of Love and Death,” and sang it : sweetly could she make and sing :

“ Sweet is true love tho’ given in vain, in vain ;  
And sweet is death who puts an end to pain :  
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.”

From Mr. Tennyson, the most imaginative poet of the day, to Crabbe, perhaps the least so among standard poets of the foregoing period, the interval is a substantially marked one ; and thus the poet of *The Borough* and of *Tales of the Hall* illustrates a corresponding frame of mind in a love-lorn maiden :

“ Hope, ease, delight, the thoughts of dying gave,  
Till Lucy spoke with fondness of the grave ;

She smiled with wasted form but spirit firm,  
And said, ' She left but little for the worm ;'  
As toll'd the bell, ' There's one,' she said, ' hath press'd  
Awhile before me to the bed of rest ;'  
And she beside her with attention spread  
The decorations of the maiden—dead."

In Lucy's case, while quickly thus the mortal part  
declined, the happiest visions cheered her spirit, and  
her interest became absorbed in holy writ.

" But one chief scene was present to her sight,  
Her Saviour resting in the Tomb at night ;  
Her fever rose, and still her wedded mind  
Was to that scene, that hallow'd cave, confined,  
Where in the shade of death the body laid,  
There watch'd the spirit of the wandering maid.  
Her looks were fix'd, entranced, illumed, serene,  
In the still glory of the midnight scene ;  
There at her Saviour's feet, in visions blest,  
The enraptured maid a sacred joy possess'd ;  
In patience waiting for the first-born ray  
Of that all-glorious and triumphant day :  
To this idea all her soul she gave,  
Her mind reposing by the sacred grave."

History has its morbid chronicles of cherished  
familiarity with the grave—say not so much with its  
sublime attractions as its attractions by repulsion.  
Readers of Macaulay will at once recall his descrip-  
tion of Spain's Second Charles being haunted, like his  
ancestor, Charles the Fifth, by a strange curiosity to  
pry into the secrets of that grave to which he was  
hastening ; and of the unhappy monarch descending  
by torchlight into the dark vaults of the cemetery

formed by Philip the Second beneath the pavement of the Church of St. Lawrence, where reposed three generations of Castilian princes, and penetrating to that superb and gloomy chamber where, round the great black crucifix, were ranged the coffins of the kings and queens of Spain : how he bade his attendants open the massy chests of bronze in which the relics of his predecessors decayed ; how he looked on the ghastly spectacle with little emotion till the coffin of his first wife was unclosed, and she appeared before him—such was the skill of the embalmer—in all her well-remembered beauty ; and how, after casting one glance on those beloved features, unseen for eighteen years, over which corruption seemed to have no power, he rushed from the vault, exclaiming, “She is with God ; and I shall soon be with her.” The awful sight is said to have completed the ruin of his body and mind. In another work the historian refers to a longing to pry into those mysteries of the grave from which human beings avert their thoughts, as long hereditary in that royal house ; Juana, for instance, from whom the mental constitution of her posterity seems to have derived a morbid taint, having sate, year after year, by the bed on which lay the ghastly remains of her husband, in his bejewelled and embroidered habit as he lived ; while her son Charles found an eccentric pleasure in celebrating his own obsequies, in putting on his shroud, placing himself in the coffin, covering himself with the pall, and lying as

one dead till the requiems had been sung, and the mourners had departed, leaving him alone in the tomb ;—his son, again, Philip the Second, finding a similar pleasure in gazing on the huge chest of bronze in which his remains were to be laid, and especially on the skull which, encircled with the crown of Spain, grinned at him from the cover. “ Philip the Fourth, too, hankered after burials and burial places, gratified his curiosity by gazing on the remains of his great-grandfather, the emperor, and sometimes stretched himself out at full length like a corpse in the niche which he had selected for himself in the royal cemetery.”

The distinguished Spanish painter, Luis de Vargas, used to lie in a coffin some hours daily, meditating upon death. A very faint sort of parallel, perhaps, is what Leslie tells us of Newton, the English artist, that he had the funeral service read to him by anticipation, and praised it as “ very fine.” The well-known Allen of Holland House never went with the family to Ampthill, without visiting the vault where was laid a winsome young girl who had been a sort of pupil of his, and sitting alone for an hour ; and it was in an adjoining vault, which he had constructed at the time, as his friend Jeffrey relates, that he ultimately directed his own body to be laid.

However deep be the grave, says Michelet, grief feels, for all its depth, the powerful attractions of death, and yields to their impulse. The words of

union, he goes on to say (of Louis of Orleans and his widow, A.D. 1407), "Ye twain shall be one flesh," are not a vain sound ; they last for the survivor. "Let them, then, be fulfilled. . . . Until then, the survivor will daily knock blindly at this tomb, will question it, and seek to bring it to account . . . it knows not what to answer ; should he break it to pieces, it would be to no purpose, it could tell no more. . . . In vain, persisting in doubt, goading himself to madness, and denying death, he drags off the hateful stone"—the reference here is to a memorable episode in the royal history of Portugal;—"in vain, fainting from grief and the repugnance inherent in nature, he dares to lift the winding sheet, and exposing to the light what he shuns to look upon, disputes with the worms that shapeless and terrible something—which was, however, Inez de Castro." The tradition is, that, repairing to the church of Santa Clara, the king caused the body of the wife whom he adored to be disinterred, arrayed in royal robes, and placed on a throne, for his subjects to come and kiss the bones which had once been so beautiful a hand.

Thomas Olivers the Methodist makes mention of a certain Buckinghamshire baronet, said by Southey to have been Sir John Price, of Buckland, who, after losing his wife, a plain farmer's daughter, daily visited her in her vault, whence at last he took her up, and kept her for several years in his bedchamber. There was no such result, here, as in the *Golden Supper* of

Mr. Tennyson, where Julian descends into the vault, to be all alone with all he loves, and kiss her on the lips.

“—The fancy stirr’d him so  
He rose and went, and entering the dim vault,  
And, making there a sudden light, beheld  
All round about him that which all will be.

. . . . And kneeling there—  
Down in the dreadful dust that once was man,  
Dust, as he said, that once was loving hearts,  
Hearts that had beat with such a love as mine—  
He softly put his arm about her neck  
And kiss’d her more than once.”

The sepulture in this case was as that of Shakspeare’s Juliet. And Juliet it is whose anticipations of such a contingency take this form of ghastly expression and expressiveness :

“Or shut me nightly in a charnel-house,  
O’er-cover’d quite with dead men’s rattling bones,  
With reeky shanks, and yellow chapless sculls,  
Or bid me go into a new-made grave,  
And hide me with a dead man in his shroud ;  
Things that, to hear them told, have made me tremble—”

long before her actual consignment, in life, to the tomb of all the Capulets. Romeo’s midnight visit to that tomb, “gorged with the dearest morsel of the earth,” is all to the purpose. There he finds his Juliet lying, and to him “her beauty makes that vault a feasting presence full of light;” upon that beauty Death as yet has had no power—and for better reason, or in a truer sense, than is within Romeo’s ken.

What a contrast to the Eastern legend of the king that desired to behold the famous Sultan Mahmud, a century after death, and gave command to unlock the granite gate of the sepulchre, and with a lamp went down into the tomb, he and all his court.

“ — Out of the nether gloom  
There rose a loathsome stench intolerable.  
. . . All that was left upon his marble bed  
Of the great Sultan was a little heap  
Of yellow bones, and a dry skull, with deep  
Eye-sockets.”

Of the living eyes that glared in those sockets it  
skills not here to speak.

But these are not to be reckoned among the sublime attractions of the grave. Attractions of any kind, to some natures, such as Charles Lamb's, the grave has none. He was too sympathetic a student of the old dramatists not to enter into their grim liking for mortuary miscellanies ; but Elia the Essayist, for his own part, disavowed all fellow-feeling with people who profess an indifference to life, or hail the end of their existence as a port of refuge, speaking of the grave as of some soft arms, in which they may slumber as on a pillow. “ Some have wooed death—but out upon thee, I say, thou foul, ugly phantom ! I detest, abhor, execrate thee . . . as in no instance to be excused or tolerated, but shunned as an universal viper ; to be branded, proscribed, and spoken ill of.” Attraction by repulsion has already

been hinted at in these pages ; and some such attraction may Elia have found, as a devout scholar of Shakspeare's school, in the grave-ward tendencies of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. Him, a German commentator, Franz Horn, characterizes as feeling himself most at home among the dead and the tombs—brooding with a real pleasure over ideas of corruption. Hartley Coleridge, again, speaks of his longing for dissolution, his fond familiarity with graves, and worms, and epitaphs, as forming, as it were, the background, the bass accompaniment of Hamlet's character—sounding at ever recurrent intervals like the slow knell of a pompous funeral, that solemnizes the mournful music and memorial pageantry. Shakspearean touches there are; on and off at the tangent, in *The Bride's Tragedy* of Lovell Beddoes, and one to our purpose closes a scene in the fourth act, where Lenora utters her

“ Farewell: I will go search about for Comfort,  
Him that, enrobed in mouldering cerements, sits  
At the gray tombstone's head beneath the yew;  
Men call him Death, but Comfort is his name.”

In *The Churchyard* of one who wrote, in prose, whole chapters on churchyards, and published them under that grimly alliterative title, one stanza suggestively runs :—

“ Death—death was in my heart. Methought I felt  
A heavy hand that press'd me down below;  
And some resistless power  
Made me, in that dark hour,  
Half long to be, where I abhor'd to go.”

Not afraid of death, Alton Locke declares himself to have been, nor ever to have experienced that sensation, though not physically brave, and though as thoroughly afraid of pain as any child can be: "But that next world has never offered any prospect to me, save boundless food for my insatiable curiosity." Its legitimately "sublime attractions"—those at least of its portals, the grave and gate of death—are of frequent incidental mention in Southey's varied verse; as where, in the dedication of one poem to his daughter Edith May, he speaks of her happy nature turning by instinct from the painful thought, so that scarcely could she bear to hear him name the Grave—she knowing not how large a portion of his heart was there. So with the gentle Mooma in his *Tale of Paraguay*:—

"Her heart was there, and there she felt and knew  
That soon full surely should her spirit be.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sometimes she spake with short and hurried breath,  
As if some happy sight she seem'd to see,  
While in the fulness of a perfect faith,  
Even with a lover's hope, she lay and look'd for death."

So with Florinda in his *Roderick, the Last of the Goths*, described as one who, if the grave had oped beneath her, would have thrown herself, even like a lover, in the arms of Death.

Shelley pleads against a cherished habit of communing with mortality, and yielding, as if spell-bound, to the fascinations of death and the sublime attractions of the grave:

“Ye hasten to the dead ! What seek ye there,  
Ye restless thoughts and busy purposes  
Of the idle brain, which the world’s livery wear ?  
O thou quick Heart, which pantest to possess  
All that anticipation feigneth fair !  
Thou vainly curious Mind, which wouldest guess  
Whence thou didst come, and whither thou may’st go,  
And that which never yet was known wouldest know—  
Oh, whither hasten ye, that thus ye press  
With such swift feet life’s green and pleasant path,  
Seeking alike from happiness and woe  
A refuge in the cavern of grey death ?  
O heart, and mind, and thought ! What thing do you  
Hope to inherit in the grave below ?”

Mrs. Browning’s *Rhapsody of Life’s Progress* includes special mention of a time when, as we lie in the dark here, we become aware of a sight and a sound “beyond hearing and seeing,”—become aware that a Hades rolls deep on all sides—

“With its infinite tides  
About and above us,—until the strong arch  
Of our life creaks and bends as if ready for falling,  
And through the dim rolling, we hear the sweet calling  
Of spirits that speak in a soft under-tongue,  
The sense of the mystical march ;  
And we cry to them softly, ‘Come nearer, come nearer,  
And lift up the lap of this Dark, and speak clearer,  
And teach us the song that ye sung.’”

With another “here we lie” that rhapsody comes to an end, as life itself does,—when again “on the knee of a mild Mystery that smiles with a change, here we lie.

“O DEATH, O BEYOND,  
Thou art sweet, thou art strange !”

## XXVI.

### *LAST WORDS.*

THE last words of the most insignificant people are held in remembrance by survivors. Those of memorable men are accounted ever memorable in world-wide literature.

Of the last words upon the Cross, of Him who suffered upon it for our salvation, it fits not here to speak. Let this allusion to them stand in a paragraph by itself.

But from all sources, sacred and secular, come crowding upon the memory undying records of dying words. Those of the proto-martyr Stephen, which having said he fell asleep. Those of the murdered mother of Nero, to the murderer commissioned by her son, and in horrible reference to the sonship,—*Ventrem feri*. Those of St. Antony, “Farewell, my children; Antony departs, and is with you no more.” Those of Martin of Tours, spoken as he expired, and as if by way of avaunt to the evil spirit that tempted him at that supreme hour, nay minute,—“Thou hast nothing in me. I go to Abraham’s bosom.” Those of the Venerable Bede,—“Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,”—in the act

of articulating which last name he expired. Confused is the crowding in of these memories ; and so we hearken back to Socrates telling Crito, “we owe a cock to *Æsculapius*. Discharge this debt, therefore, on my account, and don’t neglect it.” Crito’s assent, and added query, had Socrates no other commands ? were unanswered : the old man eloquent had said his last, in those homely words. Plato, according to Plutarch, at the point of death, congratulated himself in that he was born a Greek, and the contemporary of Sophocles. Mr. Tennyson puts these last words into the mouth of Lucretius, to her that clasped, kissed him, and waisted her distress :

“ — Care not thou !  
Thy duty ? What is duty ? Fare thee well !”

The own words of Lucretius in life seem to apply to the last words of those who are leaving it,—

“ *Nam veræ voces tum demum pectore ab imo  
Ejiciuntur, et eripitur persona, manet res.*”

The last or nearly the last recorded utterance of Vespasian is characteristic of the man : “ *Ah !* ” he whispered to his attendants, “ methinks I am becoming a god.” *Væ! puto deus fio.* Nearly the last ; for of later date seems to have been the emperor’s exclamation, in the crisis of his disorder, that an Imperator ought to die standing ; hence his demand to be raised upright, for that special purpose. Bacon takes note of the *deus fio* as Vespasian’s last words,

coupling them with mention of the *Livia, conjugii nostri memor vive, et vale* of Augustus, the "Strike, if it be for the benefit of the Roman people" of Galba, and the "Be quick, if any thing remains for me to do," of Septimius Severus. The last words of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, addressed to the centurion of the watch, according to Zonaras, were, "Turn to the rising sun, for I am setting." The prospect of such a son succeeding him could not be such as to console him; for, as Dean Merivale says, he could not hide from himself that Commodus was vicious, cruel, and illiterate. On the night when Antoninus Pius lay a-dying, the tribune who came to ask for the "pass" is said to have received from the emperor's lips the expressive word, the characteristic last word, "*Æquanimitas*." Gibbon describes Mahomet in the agony of dissolution, raising his eyes towards the roof of the house, and with a steady look, though a faltering voice, uttering "the last broken, though articulate words, 'O God! . . . pardon my sins! . . . Yes, . . . I come, . . . among my fellow-citizens on high,'"—and then peaceably expiring on a carpet spread upon the floor.

The last words of Lewis the Pious were the German, *Aus, aus*,—his attendants believing him to be (like Martin of Tours) bidding an evil spirit, of whose presence he was conscious, avaunt. *Almost* his last words were expressive of forgiveness to his son Lewis of Bavaria, who was in arms against him (not without

provocation), and "bringing down his grey hairs in sorrow to the grave." One almost inevitable drawback to such records of last words, is justly alleged to be the perpetually recurring doubt how far the words given to us as heard from dying lips were ever spoken. There are, it is admitted, few circumstances of life in which what is said is so impressive to a listener; but it is denied that the momentary impressiveness of the scene is equivalent to a guaranty for the accurate transmission of its details through an indefinite succession of oral reporters to the chronicler who first writes them down. "The doubt which hovers over the authenticity of so many famous sayings of historical persons at critical moments of their lives, is apt to hang with even more than usual cloudiness over the record of their utterances *in articulo mortis.*" But there is one class of eminent persons the records of whose last words are recognized by the most critical as bearing a clearer stamp of authenticity than in ordinary cases; those, namely, who have not retired from life and history by a natural death, but helped to make history by the public suffering of a violent one. Doubters of the accuracy of the received versions of Pitt's last words, and of Cavour's (*State sicuri che ormai la cosa va*), have no doubt as to the last words, or word, of Charles the First; and if they are not sure about those of Lewis the Sixteenth, it is only because they were overpowered by the roll of Santerre's drums. So again the details of

the deaths of Sir Thomas More, Sir Walter Raleigh, and of that very different man, Simon Lord Lovat, are accepted without reserve as forming not less natural and consistent illustrations of their respective characters than their portraits drawn by the best masters—the evidence of authenticity being as perfect in the one case as in the other. The same too with the last words of the most heroic among the victims of the revolutionary guillotine, tinged as the phrases are with the “peculiar lurid brilliancy of the time.” In the medley of instances into which we plunge, all degrees of the *vrai* and the *vraisemblable* will perhaps occur, but many more of the cases which are open to exception, in regard of literal precision in the record, than of those last named to which historical publicity gave a voucher at the time, and perhaps for all time.

Under the influence of the general desire that is felt to become acquainted with the dying words of illustrious men, many such utterances have been collected\*—such as *Last Words of Eminent Persons*, compiled by Mr. Joseph Kaines; but it often happens, as Professor Roberts (of the New Testament Revision conference) observes, that those who have obtained great renown during this life, are silent at the hour of death; or, if they do speak, their utter-

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\* Not one of which collections, however, has it been the good fortune of the present compiler ever to see.

ances are so incoherent and unmeaning that it requires an exercise of fancy to attach to them any significance. To one who was anticipating from Whitefield a special testimony for Christ which should be borne on his death-bed, the great preacher declared, "I shall die silent"; and so it came to pass. The silence was eloquent; and by it, he, being dead, as in it, he dying, yet speaketh.

But to proceed with our varied examples of the winged words whose flight is from the brink of the grave, as if a message from it. "Pray for me, my son," were the last words (to the faithful Cardinal of Pavia, who watched him dying) of that Pope Pius II. who, in Dean Milman's words, redeemed so nobly at the close of his life the "weakness, the treachery, the inconsistency, the unblushing effrontery of self-interest of his earlier years"—the only Pope who, in his deep and conscientious devotion, would imperil his own sacred person in the Crusade against the Turks; whose faith became more ardent as that of others waxed cold; and who, "refined and accomplished man" as he was, died as Peter the Hermit or St. Bernard might have died.

The last words of Michael Angelo were, "In your passage through this life, remember the sufferings of Jesus Christ." Professor Blunt affectionately tells how our Sixth Edward, "having finished his short but saintly course," his sixteenth year not yet completed, commended his people to God, and then, as he sunk

in the arms of Sir Henry Sidney, exclaimed, "I am faint; Lord, have mercy on me, and receive my spirit;" and so departed. "I die like a good Catholic, in faith and obedience to the Holy Roman Church," were the thoroughly consistent words, the last ones, of Philip the Second, *qualis ab initio*.

Cranmer at the stake kept exclaiming, until his utterance was stifled, "This unworthy hand!" (that right hand of recantation which he now bathed in the flames.) "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" At eleven o'clock on the night of death, John Knox gave a deep sigh, and said, "Now it is come;" after which he remained speechless, but, when appealed to by Bannatyne and Dr. Preston, with others then present, to give them some sign that he heard them, when rehearsing to him the "comfortable promises" of holy writ, he lifted up one of his hands, and, sighing twice, expired without a struggle.

"I could wish to live to do the Church more service, but cannot hope it; for my days are past, as a shadow that returns not;" thus speaking the spirit of Richard Hooker failed, and he slept in death.

The long and dangerous labours of that indefatigable ambassador of Spain, De Quadra (Bishop of Aquila), of whom (and from whom) we hear so much in Mr. Froude's History, seemed just about to prosper at last, and bear fruit—when in the moment of success he was taken away. He died expressing grief to end his services at a moment when he hoped to

be of use. His last words were, *No puedo mas*, "I can do no more."\*

Biographers of Jacob Böhme relate that on Sunday, November 18, 1624, early in the morning, he asked his son Tobias if he heard the excellent music, and being answered No, bade him open the door, that it might be better heard. When the clock struck he said, "Three hours hence is my time,"—and at six in the evening he took leave of wife and son, blessed them, said, "Now go I hence into Paradise," and fetching a deep sigh, his last sigh, fell on sleep, his last sleep.

The last words of Sir Edward Coke, dying September 3, 1633, were, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done." John Hampden's last words are said to have been a touching and beautiful prayer for the welfare of his country. The Lord Clifford, who committed suicide in 1673, was heard to utter these words, as he was cut down from the bed-tester, "Well, let men say what they will, there is a God, a just God, above,"—so at least John Evelyn reports the words in his Diary.

Some make out our Merry Monarch's latest utterance to have been his humorous apology to bystanders and lookers-on, for the unconscionable time he took in dying; others, the desire or injunction in behalf of Mistress Elinor Gwynn, "Don't let poor

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\* "So died a good servant of a falling cause—faithful even unto death."—Froude: *Hist. of Reign of Elizabeth*, vol. i. p. 525.

Nelly starve." At the moment in which the celebrated Earl of Roscommon expired (1684), he uttered, with an energy of voice expressive of the most fervent devotion, two lines of his own version of *Dies Iræ*:

"My God, my Father, and my Friend,  
Do not forsake me in my end!"

Almost the last words of Richard Baxter were "Almost well,"—and there is depth of meaning in them, considering what manner of man he was, and how he felt as he wrote of the saints' everlasting rest.

Upon dying Saunderson, the blind mathematician of Cambridge, whom the Rev. Gervaise Holmes attended at the last, and sought to convince by metaphysical arguments of the existence of a Deity, that clergyman's reference to Newton as a believing philosopher seems to have made more impression than any other argument; for his last words were, "Oh! God of Clarke and Newton, have pity on me." Compare the last words of Prussia's first Queen, the wife of the Elector Frederick, and whose intellectual preëminence was extolled by her grandson, Frederick the Great: "I am going now to satisfy my curiosity," she said, "about matters which Leibnitz has never been able to explain to me; about Space, the Infinite, Being, and Nothing; and for the King my consort I prepare a funeral pageant, which will afford him a new occasion for the display of his magnificence." The style was worthy of the dying Caroline of our Second George.

## THE RISE OF FREDERICK THE GREAT.

... but there is no difference in the sun and moon.

to a community that the first war administered  
without master in the sea. The sea Master  
had gone for a ' 'ts' ' under the guidance  
of the new King that' 's the new name' ' for the  
King of the sea that' 's the King of the  
water. The King of the water that' 's the King  
of the sea that' 's the King of the water.

to his “adorable sister,” the Duchess-dowager of Brunswick ; and before dawn on Thursday, the seventeenth, mid-way in the seventy-fifth year of his life, breathed out his last words and his last breath.

When his royal kinsman, George the Second, had died, a quarter of a century before, that aged monarch’s last words were, “Call Amelia,”—pronounced in the article of death itself ; and poor deaf Amelia, “Friedrich’s old love, now grown old and deaf,” listened wildly, we are told, for some faint sound from those lips now mute for ever, and by so sudden a stroke.

Almost if not quite the last words recorded of the noble Kaiserinn Maria Theresa—who died at Vienna, on November 29th, 1780—were uttered as she leant her head back in her chair (“bed impossible in such a struggle for breath,”) as if inclined to sleep. One of her women arranged the cushions, and asked in a whisper, “Will your Majesty sleep, then ?” “No,” answered the dying Kaiserinn ; “I could sleep, but I must not ; Death is too near. He must not steal upon me. These fifteen years I have been making ready for him ; I will meet him awake.”\* Her daughter, Marie Antoinette, chanced to tread on the executioner Sanson’s foot while on the scaffold ; and

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\* Fifteen years before she had suddenly lost her beloved Franz, and ever since had gone in widow’s dress, and annually gone down to the vault where his coffin lay, and sat there to commune with the dead.—See Carlyle, vi. 633.

“Excuse me, Monsieur, I did not do it intentionally,” are reported to have been the last words pronounced by the daughter of the Cæsars, the Queen of France, the widow of Lewis the Sixteenth. Danton’s *dernier accent* was characteristically a *mot*: “You will show my head to the people after my death,” he said to the executioner; “it is worth the pains.”

The last articulate words of Mirabeau seem to have been those he uttered when the sun rose, “Si ce n’est pas là Dieu, c’est du moins son cousin germain.” Later, incapable of speech, that “gigantic Heathen and Titan,” as Mr. Carlyle calls him, demanded passionately, by sign, pen and ink, and wrote down a vehement demand for opium, to end his agonies. The physician—it was friendly, sorrowful, watchful Cabanis—shook his head; and then Mirabeau wrote, because he could not articulate, his last word, “passionately pointing at it,”—*Dormir*, to sleep.

Lord Mansfield, the day before his death, which was in the eighty-ninth year of his age (March 20, 1793), desired to be taken out of bed and carried to his chair; but he soon wished himself back again, and kept saying, “Let me sleep! let me sleep!” These were his last words. It might have been expected, Lord Campbell remarks, that, in the wandering of his thoughts which followed, he might have conceived himself in some of the most exciting scenes of his past life, and that he might have addressed some taunt to Lord Chatham respecting the action for da-

mages to be brought against the House of Commons,—or, like Lord Tenterden, might have cautioned an imaginary jury to leave the question of libel or no libel for the court. But he never spoke more.

Almost if not quite the last words of James Brindley were an emphatic exhortation to his brother engineers, baffled by a leaky canal, to “puddle and puddle it again and again.” Almost the last articulated by the son of Grimshaw of Haworth, repentant though by repute a very reprobate, were, “What will my father say, when he sees that I am got to heaven?” The eldest son of Robert Burns reports the sad fact that the last words of the bard were a muttered execration against the legal agent by whose letter, as Dr. Chambers observes, wittingly or unwittingly, his parting days had been imbibited. “Give Dayrolles a chair” were dying Chesterfield’s last words, and the doctor in attendance calls the world to observe that the noble earl’s good-breeding quitted him only with his life. “Blessed Jesus!” were the last words of Bishop Horne: he had been “wandering” for some time before, but his very rambling showed the turn of his mind.

When one of the physicians who were called in to attend Goldsmith, told the poor restless patient he was worse than he should be from the degree of fever he had, and asked him plainly, “Is your mind at rest?” “No, it is not,” were Oliver’s last recorded words.

The calm of a life-long discipline, observes a recent essayist, is seen in its permanent effect upon the spirit in the well-known farewell of Addison—"See with what ease a Christian can die," or in the affectionate calm of Scott's "God bless you all," or in Mackintosh's quiet exclamation, "Happy!" The same quiet exclamation "Happy!" was that which formed the latest utterance of Dr. Andrew Combe. Paley is said to have died with a characteristic expression of cheerful equanimity while his nurses were altering his position in bed. He had desired them to effect this, and on being told by his doctor that he was in danger of dying under the attempt, he quietly rejoined, "Well—try—never mind,"—and after some severe convulsions expired.

Washington's latest utterance is said to have been, "It is well,"—and fancy loves to attach to it a significance of mystical import. The last day of both John Adams and Thomas Jefferson—the second and third of American Presidents—has often been recorded, as Mr. Ludlow remarks, in recording it once again. It was on the morning of the 4th July, 1826, the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, that the din of bells ringing and of guns and crackers firing, woke up old John Adams, who was asked if he knew what it all meant. After a moment—"Oh, yes! it is the glorious 4th of July—God bless it! God bless you all!" Then, after a while: "It is a great and glorious day;" then, after

a last pause : "Jefferson still survives." At noon his last illness came on : at 6 p.m. he died. Jefferson was then himself dead since one o'clock, his last words being, "I resign my soul to my God, and my daughter to my country."

The death of a later President, John Adams' son, in 1848, has been compared by an admirer to that of Chatham. John Quincy Adams was struck with paralysis in "the House" on the 21st of February ; lay unconscious in the speaker's room till the 23rd, on the evening of which day he died ; his last words, as they moved him into that room, being, "This is the last of earth : I am content."

General Jackson, whose language has been characterized as solely remarkable for a pertinacious infraction of the third commandment, eventually abandoned this bad habit so far as to emphasize his sentences with the gentler ejaculation of "By the eternal!"—with which ejaculation he is, in fact, alleged to have departed this life ; though what precise meaning it can then have had commentators are at a loss to imagine.

*Ce que nous connaissons est peu de chose ; ce que nous ignorons est immense*, were the last words of Laplace.

Of William Pitt it was asserted, as Macaulay says, in many after-dinner speeches, Grub Street elegies, and academic prize-poems and prize declamations, that the great minister died exclaiming, "O my country!" This is a fable, adds his lordship ; but it

is true that the last words to which Pitt gave utterance, while he knew what he said, were broken exclamations ("My country! how I leave my country!") about the alarming state of public affairs. "I have done my duty; I praise God for it," were the very last words that passed the lips of Nelson. Suvarov's expiring words were to desire the portrait of the great Catherine to be buried with him. Napoleon's were, "Mon Dieu—la nation française—tête d'armée."\* "I pray you to bear me witness that I meet my fate like a brave man," were Major André's.

Brigadier-General Rice, killed in the frightful carnage in Spottsylvania, just previously to his death in the hospital, requested to be turned, and on being asked which way, replied, "Turn my face towards the enemy." Those were his last words.

A watcher beside the death-bed of Mozart says, that the last movement of his lips was an endeavour

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\* Arthur H. Clough made these dying words of Napoleon the subject of one of his miscellaneous poems, beginning—

"Is it this, then, O world-warrior,  
That, exulting, through the folds  
Of the dark and cloudy barrier  
Thine enfranchised eye beholds?  
Is, when blessed hands relieve thee  
From the gross and mortal clay,  
This the heaven that should receive thee?  
'Tête-d'armée.'"

With this is contrasted the silence of Wellington's solitary death-bed.

to indicate where the kettledrums should be used in his Requiem. "I think I still hear the sound,"\* wrote this witness—his sister-in-law—more than thirty years after the event. Beethoven's last words were, "Clap, my friends, the play is over." *Plaudite, amici, comædia finita est.* Demonstrably apocryphal is the sensational story of Palmer, the actor, dropping dead after speaking the words, "There is another and a better world," in and as the *Stranger*. Last words, a dramatic critic has remarked, ought to be received with caution: a characteristic sentence may be pronounced by a man, and repeated as his "last words," when in reality he did not die until long after they were spoken:—the awful significance claimed for "last words" can be imparted only by death immediately following their utterance, as in the case of the well-known player, Paterson, who dropped dead in Moody's [arms, after repeating from *Measure for Measure* the lines,

" — Reason thus with life :  
If I do lose thee, I do lose a thing  
That none but fools would keep : a breath thou art."

Lamb reports of that Robin Goodfellow of the stage, Dicky Suett, known, like Puck, by his note, "Ha ! ha ! ha !" and to whose chuckling "O La !" thousands of hearts responded, that uttering these two syllables, upon the stock of which he had drolled

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\* Letters of Mozart, vol. ii. p. 290.

“richer than the cuckoo,” he died,—receiving the last stroke, without varying his wonted tranquility and tune, “with the simple exclamation, worthy to have been recorded in the epitaph, ‘O La ! O La !’” “And you too, my Constantine!” were the last words of the murdered Emperor Paul, when mistaking Ouvaroff, one of the conspirators, for his son. Schiller took a tranquil leave of his friends, and said, “Calmer and calmer” to one of them who asked how he felt. Once for a moment he looked up, as from deep sleep, with an animated air, and said, “Many things are growing clear and plain to me,”—and so died. M. de Fontanes cried with fervour, “O mon Jésus ! mon Jésus !” in which *cri suprême*, the foremost of French critics observes of this poet of the *Four des Morts*, “tout son cœur revenait.” “J'aime,” I love, was the *dernier accent* which the parting spirit of Madame d'Houdetot, “en s'exhalant,” as Madame de Rémusat expresses it, “ait porté vers la Divinité.” Talleyrand said more than once during his dying moments, “La machine s'en va,” and these words were his last. The words, addressed to his patient wife, “My dear, you must be very tired,” were the Czar Alexander's last. Contrast with them the last of Ali Pacha : “Run and put to death Vasiliki, my wife, that she may follow me to the tomb, and the traitors may not sully her beauty.”

On the last evening of his life, Carl Maria von Weber, as he sat panting in his easy chair, with Sir

George Smart, Moscheles, and others, grouped around him, could speak only of the journey home upon which he was so importunately bent. At ten o'clock, they urged him to retire to bed. When, as we read in his son's biography of the great composer, he had given his white, transparent, trembling hand to all, murmuring gently, but in soft earnest tones, the words, "God reward you all for your kind love to me!" he was led by Sir George Smart and another into his bedroom. Undress himself he could not; but with his own hand Weber "wound-up his watch, with his usual punctiliose care; then, with all that charm of amiability, for which he was conspicuous through life, he murmured his thanks to his friend, and said, 'Now let me sleep.' These were the last words that mortal ear heard the great artist utter."

The last moments of Coleridge's disciple, Mr. J. H. Green, himself eminent as a professor of medicine, if not of philosophy, are described as having been as serene as his life. Having taken leave of his friends, and thanked the attached servants who were assembling in grief around him, he saw Mr. Carter, his medical attendant, enter the room; and, pointing to the region of the heart, the dying man said significantly, "Congestion." He then, with his finger on his wrist, we are told, "noted the feeble pulses which were between him and death. Presently he said, 'Stopped,' and died with the word on his lips."

On Friday, January 12, 1837, the frost being, in

Lord Campbell's words, "dreadfully severe," the dying Lord Eldon was perceptibly nearer his end. His medical adviser remarked, "It is a cold day, my Lord," to which the answer given, in a low and placid voice, was, "It matters not to me, where I am going, whether the weather here be hot or cold." These appear to have been the last words he ever uttered.

The dying expletive of one of his predecessors on the woolsack, Lord Thurlow,—characteristically profane—has been cited by a *Saturday Reviewer* as a grotesque kind of illustration of the hold retained by early nature over all exterior forces of habit or usage, even in face of the solemnities of the hour—"I'm d——d if I don't believe I'm dying."

A later chancellor, Lord Lyndhurst, departed in peace, with the placid murmur on his lips, "Happy, happy, happy!"

Lord Tenterden's last words are said to have been, "Gentlemen of the jury, consider your verdict."

Lord Kilwarden, the murdered Lord Chief-Justice of Ireland, rebuked with his latest breath the exclamation of a shocked bystander, that the assassins should meet their death next day: "Murder must be punished; but let no man suffer for my death but on a fair trial, and by the laws of his country." The dying magistrate raised his head to utter this injunction, and then immediately expired. The Duke of Berri died after uttering the wish that he could at

least depart with the belief that the blood of his assassin would not flow because of his crime.

The last words of Dragonetti, the great contrabassist, are quoted by Mr. Phillips \* as a sufficient evidence of his child-like nature. Lying on the sofa surrounded by many of his most intimate friends, he said, "Stand aside, I see my father; and my mother is coming to kiss me." Then, growing faint, he fell back exhausted, and died. "I am ready," were the last words of the elder Charles Mathews. "Well, I've had a happy life," were those of William Hazlitt, —from whom they were scarcely to have been expected. Miss Austen, sinking rapidly, being asked by her attendants whether there was anything that she wanted, gave her last answer, and never spoke again, "Nothing but death." Baron Alderson being asked how he felt, exclaimed briefly, but characteristically, "The worse, the better for me,"—after which all was unbroken slumber. "God bless you—God bless you!" was the last intelligible utterance of George Crabbe. "Joy!" was that of Hannah More.

Of Edward Irving his biographer tells us that as the gloomy December Sunday (1834) sunk into the night shadows, his latest audible words fell from his pale lips: the last thing like a sentence that could be made out was, "If I die, I die unto the Lord." The latest utterance of Mrs. Schimmelpenninck was that

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\* On the authority of Vincent Novello, who was present.

of a rapt listener—"Do you not hear the voices? and the children's are the loudest!" Frederick Robertson had passed through his last day\* upon earth without intenser suffering than usual; but towards ten o'clock that night a change took place; the pain returned with bitter violence; and, feebly crying at intervals, "My God, my Father—my God, my Father!" he lived for two hours in a mortal agony, during which he never lost clear consciousness. When those who tended him sought to relieve him by changing his position, he shrank from the touch, and exclaimed, "I cannot bear it: let me rest. I must die. Let God do His work." These were his last words. At a few minutes past midnight all was over.† The last whispered words of that "intrepid champion of the Church," locally styled in Sydney the first apostle of the Church of England, the Rev. Samuel Marsden,—originally a blacksmith, inclined by birth and breeding to Methodism, yet in Australia accounted a second Hildebrand on the strength of his "High Church and dictatorial proclivities,"—were "New Zealand." "I die for Ireland," were the last

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\* August 15, 1853.

† His biographer, Mr. Stopford Brooke, says that his "hope and trust in his Heavenly Father never failed during this dreadful time" of his last illness; and that he "felt assured of his immortality in Christ." "He died, giving up his spirit with his last words, in faith and resignation to his Father."—*Life and Letters of Rev. F. W. Robertson*, vol. ii. pp. 235, 239.

words of that Thomas Drummond who, though a Scotchman, a Presbyterian, and a man of rigid habits, staid demeanour, cold reserve, and talents rather scientific than political, as his very admirers allow, was selected to be Under-Secretary of State for Ireland, under Lords Mulgrave and Morpeth, and who, we are assured, is by Irishmen of opposite creeds and parties readily acknowledged at this day to have lived and died for their country, which was not his. With eyes raised heavenward, and a look of indescribable brightness, Julius Charles Hare uttered his last words, "Upwards, upwards!" A morning or two before he died, Sir James Graham was heard to say: "All night I have had those words of Homer in my head, that tell how death is sure to come to all alike, whether a man be firm of heart or scared by its approach." His long account with the world closed, the dying statesman's mind appeared to commune with itself; and the last few hours, says his biographer, though not undisturbed by bodily suffering, were passed in a state of wakeful and wistful calm. "As the life-tide ebbed, his spirit, ere it parted from its last anchorage on earth, seemed to heave gently to and fro, as tender murmurs of days, long gone by, alternated with earnest yearnings towards the world to come. There were no regrets, no murmurings, no fretfulness in pain. Ambition and its aching cares had been all put away; and of time, nothing now remained for him, but the affections of the loved ones

who surrounded him. Gleams of the sunshine that had gilded his youth broke in upon him now and then, while the intermediate space, once crowded with images of strife and struggle, faded into nothingness. The exquisite lines already referred to, which had fascinated his boyish sympathy with manly grief, came to his dying lips unsought for, and were the last articulate words he uttered.\* John Pritt Harley, seized by the "fell serjeant" on the stage itself, answered the inquiries of those around him in the words of Bottom the Weaver, "I have an exposition of sleep come upon me." Urged to say who was his doctor, the last intelligible words reported of him were, "I never had any." The late Dr. Robert Chambers, in his *Book of Days*,—to the labour in compiling which he traced his death-blow,—inserted a variety of Last Words, as uttered by various noteworthies. What his own were, his elder brother has told us in the memoir of their joint career. "His last, faintly uttered words were: "Quite comfortable—quite happy—nothing more!"

Fiction of course abounds with imputed or invented last words; but the invention may often enough have been suggested by actual incident; nor does the "extravagant and erring fancy" play much of a part in what of figment there may be in them. Bunyan

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\* *Life and Times of Sir J. Graham*, by T. McCullagh Torrens, vol. ii. pp. 670 sq.

is particular in detailing the parting utterances of his pilgrims on the hither side Jordan. Of Christiana, "The last words I heard her say were, I come, Lord, to be with Thee and bless Thee!" Mr. Feeble-mind's last words were, "Hold out, faith and patience. So he went over to the other side." Mr. Ready-to-halt, again: "The last words he was heard to say were, Welcome life! So he went his way." "The last words of Mr. Despondency were, Farewell night, welcome day!" His daughter (Mrs. Much-afraid) went through the river singing, but none could understand what she said. "The last words of Mr. Honest were, Grace reigns! So he left the world." "Take me, for I come unto Thee," was Mr. Standfast heard to say, and there an end. All these and the like last words might have been written down by Bunyan from memory, not invention. And so might very many of those which occur in the more worldly concoctors of romance. "Give me a draught of water—Heavenly air! Freedom! freedom!" are as characteristically the last words of Goethe's *Goetz von Berlichingen* as "Charge, Chester, charge! on, Stanley, on!" those of Scott's *Marmion*. The Waverley novels may not be superabundant in citable last words of note; but we may refer, in passing, to the "And fearing nothing," of Sergeant Bothwell in *Old Mortality*, and to the old' pedagogue's *ultimatum*, as reported by Giles Gosling in *Kenilworth*: "He passed away in a blessed frame '*Morior—mortuus sum vel*

*fui—mori*—, these were his latest words ; and he just added, ‘my last verb is conjugated.’’ Old Elspeth, in *The Antiquary*, expires in uttering the last words of her rambling sentences, responsive to a fancied summons : “Teresa, Teresa, my lady calls us!—Bring a candle, the grand staircase is as mirk as a Yule midnight.—We are coming, my lady!” With these words she sinks back on the settle, and from thence sidelong to the floor ; and “It’s a’ ower, she has passed away even with that last word,” is Edie Ochiltree’s exclamation as he lifts her from the ground.

The military response “Here!” of Cooper’s old Leatherstocking has its echo in the pathetic *Adsum!* of Colonel Newcome. “Constance, remember—the oath—revenge,” is the unhallowed bequest of Vernon in *Godolphin*. Medon, in the same author’s *Last Days of Pompeii*, expires in replying to the compassionate Nazarene’s lament at Death having severed the old man and his son, “No, no, no!” his voice growing lower with each word,—“Death has been more kind ;” for he takes the father too. Balzac’s Eugénie Grandet implores her father’s blessing, and gets for answer from the moribund miser, “Aie bien soin de tout. Tu me rendras compte de ça là-bas.” Faintly overheard are the last syllables of le Père Goriot, that Lear of private life (the life and the Lear both very French, *bien entendu*), “Ah ! mes anges !”—the author’s comment being, “Deux mots, deux

murmures accentués par l'âme qui s'envola sur cette parole." The Death of a Titan is the heading of that chapter in the elder Dumas's most voluminous of all romances, in which we see Porthos swallowed up in a sepulchre of broken stones ; unavailing were the efforts of his three friends to release him from the superincumbent granite,—"and the rough voice of Porthos murmured in a jeering tone those supreme words which came to his lips with his last respiration, 'Too heavy.' " Those of Athos in a subsequent chapter are akin to the *dernier mot* of Cooper's deerslayer and Thackeray's Charterhouse Colonel,—"Here I am!" *Je ne sais*, is the appropriate dernier mot d'Abélard mourant qu'on entend à peine in M. de Rémusat's *drame*. "Le dogmatique, comme le sceptique," it has been said, "en revient à ce suprême *Que sais-je?*"

Mr. Charles Reade, in his powerful and pathetic life-history of the parents of Erasmus—Gerard Elias-soen and Margaret Brandt—makes dying Margaret turn a last look of gratitude and obedience to Gerard, who has shrived and is consoling her, and murmur, "What saint?" meaning doubtless, what saint should she invoke as an intercessor. His answer is, "He to whom the saints themselves do pray." Turning on him one more sweet look of love and submission, Margaret, we then read, "put her pretty hands together in prayer like a child.—'Jesu!'—This blessed word was her last. She lay with her eyes heaven-

ward, and her hands put together." But never word spake she more.

Three chapters later, and we come to Gerard's own death, and his last words too—last word, rather, for it is the same as hers. For "just about the hour she died he spoke his last word in this world.—'Jesu!'—And even with that word he fell asleep."

In a later fiction, Mr. Reade describes the death of a rough sailor on a desert island, who tells his sick messmate, in a voice now faint and broken, "You and I must sail together on this new voyage. I'm going out of port first; but" (in a whisper of inconceivable tenderness and simple cunning) "I'll lie-to outside the harbour till you come, my bo." Then he paused a moment. Then he added softly, "For I love you, Tom." And his author tells us these sweet words were the last of that rugged silent sailor, who never threw a word away, and whose rough breast enclosed a friendship as of the ancient world, tender, true, and lasting, that sweetened his life, and ennobled his death. In a yet later story Mr. Reade puts into small capitals the parting utterance of a Sheffield trades-unionist, from whom a local editor is striving to elicit a clue to a trade outrage: "Can you keep a secret?"—"Yes!" said Holdfast, eagerly.—"THEN SO CAN I." These, we read, were the last words of Ned Simmons—false to himself, but true to his fellows, and faithful to a terrible confederacy, which in England and the nineteenth century, was Venice and the middle ages over again.

Perhaps the most loveable, certainly the most simple-hearted, not of Mr. Trollope's English clergyman only, but of all his character portraits, is old Mr. Harding, the Warden; and his last words are duly recorded in the *Last Chronicle of Barset*: "It is so sweet to have you both here," the desolate old ex-warden tells his two married daughters: "There is nothing left for me to wish, my dears;—nothing." Dr. Thorne is enjoined by Sir Roger Scatcherd to warn "my poor boy" against the love for drink which has been the ruin of his father: "Tell him how his father died like a beast, because he could not keep himself from drink." And Mr. Trollope emphasizes the warning by the formal notice, "These, reader, were the last words spoken by Sir Roger," who uttered them with vehemence as he rose up in bed, and in the act of doing so was struck with the last stroke of paralysis. The last words of the hearty old baronet in Hood's *Tylney Hall* are to bid his heir keep up the good name of the Tyrrels as well as the estates, and never to abide a blot upon the 'scutcheon or a mortgage upon the land.

Of the spendthrift old captain in *Charlotte's Inheritance* we read, that when the doctor felt his pulse for the last time, he cried out suddenly, in his wanderings, "I have made a statement of my affairs. The liabilities are numerous—the assets *nil*; but I rely on the clemency of this court." These were his last words: sinking into a stupor betwixt sleeping and

waking, so he died. "My duty," are those of the same author's George Gilbert, in the *Doctor's Wife*. "Happy—quand même," are those of Madeleine, in *The Forlorn Hope*—addressed to remorseful Wilmot, to assure him of her peace. "Italia!" in a whisper, and with a radiant smile, "Italia!" repeated, are those of the exile Colonna in Miss Edwards' golden book, or book all about gold, with *bella età dell' oro* for its motto.—"This world's . . . too many . . . honest . . . puzzling . . ." are those of the dying Miller in George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss*—as in life he had affirmed, from his own hard experience of it, that the more straightforward you are, the more you are puzzled. In the penultimate chapter of Miss Broughton's *Not Wisely, but too Well*, we have Kate stooping over moribund Dare Stamer, and trying to interpret, with the agonized keenness that only the watcher beside a deathbed knows, the last doubtful difficult signs of consciousness, the last waving of hands, and syllabbling of adieux of him who is already half way over the black ferry of Death. Laying her face close to his lips, she hears him whisper between struggling gasps for the slow-coming breath, "Pen Dyllas,—long ago!" Then **she** knew that what he sought was the withered poppy she had given him in the Pen Dyllas corn-field years ago; and seeing that she understood him, he added in a husky whisper,—"Buried with me!" and babbling the words over and over again purposelessly.

as the dying do babble words from which the meaning has fled, he fell into a stupor, and so passed.

Poor patronized Charles—all the poorer because patronized—in Crabbe's *Tales of the Hall*, had one friend to watch over his else desolate exit, and so there came a softness to his mind, and he forgave the usage of mankind—

“ His cold long fingers now were press'd to mine,  
And his faint smile of kinder thoughts gave sign ;  
His lips moved often as he tried to lend  
His words their sound, and softly whisper'd 'Friend !'  
Not without comfort in the thought express'd  
By that calm look with which he sank to rest.”

The Kathrina of Dr. Holland's poem is described as passing to peaceful slumber like a child, the while attendant angels built the dream on which she passed to heaven :

“ The city sounds grew fainter, till at last  
We sat alone with silence and with death.  
At the first blush of morning she look'd up,  
And spoke, but not to us, 'I'm coming now.' ”

The end of Enoch Arden was on this wise. He slumbered motionless and pale, dreaming apparently of his desert island of old, and Miriam watched and dozed at intervals, when suddenly there came so loud a calling of the sea, that all the houses in the haven rang,—

“ He woke, he rose, he spread his arms abroad,  
Crying with a loud voice 'A sail ! a sail !  
I am saved'; and so fell back and spoke no more.  
—So pass'd the strong heroic soul away.”

## XXVII.

### *LAST TIMES.*

THE sight of what may be but little prized, says  
Count Basil in the tragedy,

“Doth cause a solemn sadness in the mind,  
When view'd as that we ne'er shall see again.”

When Neville the artist, in Mrs. Edwardes' story, on the wing for Rome, tells Philip that he is sitting for the last time in that room of his in which he has worked for four up-hill years, and that he has presented his old easel to his landlady for firewood, and that he starts without a regret, except that he shall not see his friend again for two years,—“Yours is a happier organization than mine,” Philip replies: “I should feel a regret at sitting at my window for the last time, and giving up my easel for firewood, after it had been my friend during four years.” At which protest the other laughs an airy laugh, and avows that it is not in his nature to create sorrows, that he is not a poet, and has no poetic tendencies whatever, and thinks Philip would be wiser to discard all such frivolous sentiment, as he will find quite enough to regret in the world, without wasting his sympathy on old easels. Another popular author, albeit distinctively devoted to the comic aspects of life, affirms, whatever Neville and congenial spirits may allege

that, let our disposition be what it may, there is a sad, desolate feeling inseparable from leaving the abode in which we have lived for any length of time: the common inanimate household things about the room, hirelings though they be to every new tenant, have become a part and parcel of our being; there is a familiarity in the very sprigs and flowers on the walls—almost a sympathy, which only a long residence can induce. “We still cling to any old residence with regard, although our sojourn therein may have been chequered with sorrows and annoyances. But those very shadows have hallowed it in our remembrance.” A metaphysical philosopher pronounces man to be so susceptible of kind affection, that he animates with his regard the very rocks, if only they are rocks that have been long familiar to him;—the single survivor of a shipwreck, who has spent many dreary years on some island, of which he has been the only inhabitant, will, in the rapture of deliverance feel, perhaps, no grief mingling with a joy so overwhelming; but when he sees the island dimly fading from his view, there will be a feeling of grief that will overcome, for the moment, even the tumultuous joy. “The thought that he is never to see again that cave which was so long his home, and that shore which he has so often trod, will rise so sadly to his mind, that it will be to him, before reflection, almost like a momentary wish that he were again in that loneliness, from which to be freed,

seemed to him before, like resurrection from the tomb." If this be so with the denizen of a desolate island, "Oh, que de larmes," as Chateaubriand exclaims, "sont répandues lorsqu'on abandonne la terre natale, lorsque, du haut de la colline de l'exil, on découvre pour la dernière fois le toit où l'on fut nourri," etc. So he writes on the last page of *Atala*; and in *René* there is a parallel passage; where the narrator cannot restrain his tears at a parting glimpse of his native woods, as he bids them *un dernier adieu*. Chateaubriand's own Memoirs expatiate on the theme that our childhood leaves behind it something of itself in those places which it has embellished, as a flower communicates its perfume to the objects which it has touched. He relates, accordingly, the emotions of tender sorrow with which, three weeks after his first communion, he left the college of Dol; but when he has to record his leaving "the great college of Rennes," he owns that he did not then experience the same regret which he felt on quitting "the little college of Dol"—perhaps, he conjectures, because he no longer possessed that innocence which invests every object with a charm. Mr. Thackeray, who declares parting to be always painful, and confesses that he "should be sorry to shake hands even with Jawkins for the last time," thinks a well-constituted convict, on coming home from transportation, ought to be rather sad at taking leave of Van Diemen's Land. Colonel Whyte Melville supposes a reader

fixed for weeks and weeks in a place which bores him to death, so that he has learnt to loathe every tree and shrub and hedgerow in the dreary landscape ; shivers up and down the melancholy walks, and yawns through the dull, dark rooms, till he begins to think the hour never will arrive that is to restore him once again to liberty and light. “And then, when the hour *has* come at last, have you been able to take your departure without some half-reproachful feeling akin to melancholy—without some slight shade of regret to think that much as you have hated it, you look upon it all now for the *last* time ?” You think if you were back again, the walks would not be so very melancholy, the rooms no longer so dull and gloomy : you sigh because you are leaving it, and wonder at yourself for doing so. As Mr. Coventry Patmore writes,

“And now remorseful memory flings  
Its glory round the last regards  
Of home and all accustom’d things.”

George Colman the Younger had always deemed Aberdeen a seat of exile and a region of dulness while he sojourned there ; but he has to record, “I did not anticipate the regret I experienced on the morning of my departure from it ; but such is the force of habit, and the caprice of human nature, that, after having lived for a length of time in the place where I had been grumbling, day after day, at every thing and every body, I could not help feeling a

momentary pensiveness on quitting the old spot, and quitting it, in all probability, for ever." *A fortiori* may a John Evelyn be pensive when turning his back on Rome : "When on my way, turning about to behold this once and yet glorious city, from an eminence, I did not without some regret give it my last farewell." Or glance at a farewell glance of Wordsworth's, when a tourist on French ground :

"It was a beautiful and silent day  
That overspread the countenance of earth,  
Then fading with unusual quietness,—  
A day as beautiful as e'er was given  
To soothe regret, though deepening what it soothed,  
When by the gliding Loire I paused, and cast  
Upon his rich domains, vineyard and tilth,  
Green meadow-grounds, and many-coloured woods,  
Again, and yet again, a farewell look."

There is something sad in these "finalities," wrote Jeffrey, in one of his letters ; and in a much later one indeed just before the scene of life closed upon him for all, he wrote to the Empsons, from Craigcrook : "I have made a last lustration of all my walks and haunts, and taken a long farewell of garden, and terrace, and flowers, seas and shores, spiry towers, and autumnal fields. I always bethink me that I may never see them again. And one day that thought will be a fact ; and every year the odds run up terribly for such a consummation." That one day was to be very soon. The kindly old judge, taking his round of valedictions, is as young-hearted about

it as Lamartine's Jocelyn when, with a circuit of adieux, he *parcourait du pas tout le champêtre enclos* where he was born and bred :

" Je touchais chaque mur, je parlais à chaque arbre,  
J'allais d'un tronc à l'autre et je les embrassais ;  
Je leur prêtais le sens des pleurs que je versais . . .  
Et j'é fuyais ainsi du hêtre au sycomore,  
Réveillant mon passé pour le pleurer encore.  
Du nid de la colombe à la loge du chien,  
Je revisitais tout et je n'oubliais rien,  
Et je disais à tout un adieu sympathique."

Historically memorable as the conquest of Granada itself is the last view taken of Granada by Boabdil and his devoted band of cavaliers, from an eminence on the skirts of the Alpuxarras—arrived at which spot the Moors paused involuntarily to take a farewell gaze at their beloved city, which a few steps more would shut from their sight for ever. Never, says the chronicler of the conquest, had it appeared so lovely in their eyes ; and he dilates on the sunshine, so bright in that transparent climate, lighting up each tower and minaret, and resting gloriously upon the crowning battlements of the Alhambra, while the vega spread its enamelled bosom of verdure below, glistening with the silver windings of the Xenil. The Moorish cavaliers are pictured gazing with a silent agony of tenderness and grief upon that delicious abode, the scene of their loves and pleasures,—when suddenly a light cloud of smoke burst forth from the citadel, and presently a peal of artillery, faintly

heard, told them that the city was taken possession of, and the throne of the Moslem king was lost for ever. "Allah achbar! God is great!" broke from the lips of Boabdil, but he burst into a flood of tears the while. Fez Allah Achbar is the accepted name of the hill, not far from Padul; but the point of view commanding the last view of Granada is named by Spaniards *el ultimo sospiro del Moro*, the last sigh of the Moor.

No man who is worth his salt, Mr. Hughes has said, can leave a place where he has gone through hard and searching discipline, and been tried to the very depths of his heart, without regret, however much he may have winced under the discipline; it is no light thing to fold up and lay by for ever a portion of one's life, even when it can be laid by with honour and in thankfulness. To see a person, or to visit a place, for the last time, is at best, says the author of *Maxwell*, "a melancholy business," even though the person be indifferent, or the place in itself uninteresting. He remembers feeling a regret in leaving, for the "last time," an inconvenient cabin in an ill-found ship, at the close of a tedious voyage, full of dangers and difficulties, cares and anxieties. "But I bear these monotonous walls no ill-will now," said Mr. Meagles, when the quarantine at Marseilles was over at last: "One always begins to forgive a place as soon as it's left behind; I daresay a prisoner begins to relent towards his prison, after he is let

out." Tom Pinch, even in leaving Pecksniff's, goes near to be cut to the heart at quitting all the familiar objects in his upper room, and thinking that he saw them for the last time. Even in quitting Mrs. Mann's, that "wretched home where one kind word or look had never lighted the gloom of his infant years," Oliver Twist is said to have burst into an agony of childish grief, as the cottage gate closed after him. How could Mary Barton have said she was weary of that quiet house, where even Ben Sturgis's grumblings only made a kind of harmonious bass in the concord between him and his wife; how could she have longed for that dull little room—now it was time to leave it? "Even the very check bed-curtains became dear to her, under the idea of seeing them no more." Indeed there are not many things, besides actual physical pain, as an approved essayist remarks, which it does not cost a little pang to take leave of. And he notes how different a place looks when you are coming away from it, from what it ever looked before: old objects wear a new face, and the aspect of the whole scene is one never observed before. "All the familiar objects seem dumbly asking you to stay." As the young bird lingers about the nest, and is timid and reluctant to trust its untried wing, so, John Galt writes, the fancy of the school-boy, when he is on the point of leaving home, hovers amidst the scenes of his childhood, and wistfully looks back on a thousand little objects which,

till then, he had never thought were dear to him. The leave-taking by the Dashwood sisters of "dear, dear Norland," in Miss Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*; that by Plantagenet and Venetia, of Cherbury,—including a round of farewell visits severally to the horses and cows, the woodman in his cottage and the gamekeeper on his beat, to Marmion the bloodhound and to the peacocks on the lawn,—in Mr. Disraeli's *Venetia*, where, too, half in a spirit of mockery of their joint sorrow, Cadurcis makes a speech to the inanimate walls, as if they were aware of his impending departure; the similar leave-taking by Ferdinand of his home at Armine, in the same author's *Henrietta Temple*; to the number adducible of parallel passages in fiction, concerning valedictory last times of seeing and greeting, there is practically no limit.

A sort of weird troubrous light is cast upon the memory of last times when reflection recalls how little they were, at the moment, suspected of being indeed the very last. Boswell appends to his record of the last day he spent with his great old friend—it was at dinner with Sir Joshua Reynolds, June 30, 1784—the very natural comment, "Had I known that this was the last time that I should enjoy in this world the conversation of a friend whom I so much respected, and from whom I derived so much instruction and entertainment, I should have been deeply affected." Equally natural his vexation

when he came to look back to that *ultima dies*, that a single word of Dr. Johnson's should have been forgotten. Even Gibbon could write with warmth and feeling of the death of Lady Sheffield: "When I embraced her at your departure from Lausanne, could I imagine that it was for the last time? . . . could I apprehend that I should never, never see her again?" This was in the April of 1793; and Lord Sheffield himself, to whom it was written, and who became Gibbon's biographer and the editor of his miscellaneous works, has this note to make of his friend's sojourn in England that same summer: "He continued in good health and excellent spirits (I never knew him enjoy better); and when he came from Sheffield-place, little did I imagine it would be the last time I should have the inexpressible pleasure of seeing him there in full possession of his health." Had we but known!—the phrase is as hackneyed as the pathos in it is perennial, in the list of irrepressible but unavailing regrets.

That sacred hour could Burns never forget, nor the hallowed grove, where he and his Highland Mary for the last time met,—

"To live one day of parting love.  
Eternity will not efface  
Those records dear of transports past;  
Thy image at our last embrace;  
Ah, little thought we 'twas our last!"

Theodore Hook's biographer has indicated here and

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there in his books an isolated passage which is significant of bitter remembrances and sorrows unsubdued ; as where, in *Sayings and Doings*, the narrator professes to have once known a lovely girl, all kindness, all gentleness, all goodness, from whom he parted in the midst of gaiety,—shook hands, and left her, and never saw her again. "Had I known that I then beheld her for the *last time*, my heart would have burst." In later days, with what a strange feeling, Mr. Thackeray exclaims, we remember that last sight we have of an old friend ; that nod of farewell, and shake of the hand, that last look of the face and figure as the door closes on him, or the coach drives away !

## XXVIII.

### *THE LAST.*

IT is an old-world story, the calling this man or that the last of his kind. Plutarch quotes “a certain Roman,” unnamed, who called Philopœmen “the last of the Greeks,” meaning that Greece had not produced since his time one great man, or one that was worthy to be called her son. Brutus recognised in Cassius “the last of the Romans.” Intellectually, Boethius was the last of the Romans, says Dean Milman, and the Roman letters expired with greater dignity in his person, than the Empire in that of Augustulus. The Consolation of Philosophy indeed “appears as the last work of Roman letters, rather than as eminent among Christian writings.” The last Roman triumph, under Diocletian, finds fitting mention in Gibbon’s thirteenth chapter, as again the last semblance of one does in his forty-third chapter, when, two centuries and a half later, he has to describe the entrance of Narses into the capital, after the battle of Casilinum,—the arms and treasures of the Goths, the Franks, and Allemanni, being duly displayed, and the soldiers, with garlands in their hands, chanting the praises of a conqueror; “and Rome, for the last time, beheld the semblance of a triumph.” In his thirty-third chapter, the his-

torian of the Decline and Fall affirms of the two generals, *Æ*Etius (whose fame is immortalized by the invasion and defeat of Attila) and Boniface (whose military skill is attested by the defence of Marseilles and the deliverance of Africa), that they "may deservedly be named as the last of the Romans." Nor does Gibbon forget the claim of Boethius when he comes to him. A paragraph in his thirty-ninth chapter begins, "The senator Boethius is the last of the Romans whom Cato or Tully could have acknowledged for their countryman." In his fifty-second chapter he speaks of Rahdi as the last of the successors of Mahomet who deserved the title of commander of the faithful; the last (says Abulfeda) who represented the wealth and magnificence of the ancient caliphs—for after this twenty-ninth of the successors of the Prophet, the lords of the ancient world were reduced to the most abject misery, and exposed to the blows and insults of a servile condition.

Dean Merivale discerns in Trajan the last emperor of the Romans, in so far as he legislated with a special consideration for Italian interests, and failed to expand his views to the conception of himself as sovereign of the whole empire, but tried rather to perpetuate the selfish principle of monopoly and conquest. Even his face is said to have been the last of the imperial series that retained the true Roman type, not in the aquiline nose only, but in the broad

and low forehead, the angular chin, the firm compressed lips, and generally in the stern compactness of its structure.

There is always, it has been said, something that inspires a melancholy interest in the last of an expiring line: historians love to linger over Charles II. of Spain, the last of the proud Spanish Habsburgs, little as he intrinsically deserves their notice. The retirement of even an infinitely little Romulus Augustulus, the last Emperor of the West, to a villa in Campania, and a pension of six thousand pieces of gold, has its interest as marking a great epoch in universal history. Crescentius is one of the many candidates or claimants to be the last of the Romans —at whose death a wild shout broke from the throng that saw him die,—

“The voice of anger and of shame,  
A nation’s funeral cry,  
Rome’s wail above her only son,  
Her patriot and her latest one.”

Our Christian historian of the Jews and their dispersion tells how, among the rest, two sons of the unfortunate Prince of the Captivity effected their escape to Spain, while “the last of the House of David” (for of that lineage they fondly boasted), who reigned over the Jews of the Dispersion in Babylonia, perished on an ignominious scaffold.

Mr. Freeman leaves, or left, to Dean Stanley to fight out with Mr. Kingsley the discovery in Edward

the Confessor of a rival to Hereward as “the last of the Saxons,” although the historian-critic, with Harold before his eyes, thought Mr. Kingsley had, in point of time, made a better choice, in *Hereward the Wake*, than the Dean, in *Historical Memorials of Westminster Abbey*.

Warburton is designated by the *Edinburgh Review* “the last of our great divines,” as Waterland is by Mr. Dowling “the last of our great patristical scholars.” William Bowyer, erudite, upright, benevolent, simple-hearted, is quoted as “the last of the learned printers.” Thomas Bowdler has the credit, whatever its value, of being “the last of the Non-jurors.” Sainte-Beuve, in one of his *Pensées*, appears to have plumed himself on possibly being *le dernier des delicats*—for “ce serait encore une gloire,” he asserts, “dans cette grande confusion de la société qui commence.” So be it, then: “Soyons les derniers de notre ordre, de notre ordre d'esprit.” Charette, says Alison, left the glorious name of being the last of the Vendean chiefs. The same historian hails in Lord Eldon “the last of the sturdy old patriots,” “the *ultimus Romanorum*—the latest relic of a race which, by their firmness and resolution, created the British empire.” For Dr. Sterne is claimed the distinction of having been the last of the New England ministers to assert for himself that peculiar position, as God's ambassador, which was such a reality in the minds of the early Puritan community. Mr. Jerningham finds honourable men-

## THE LAST OF THE BREED.

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tion in Crabb Robinson's diary as "the last of the old school" in polite society. "Take care of him, for he and I are the last of the breed," said the Cardinal York, at Rome, of a little dog of the King Charles's breed that was handed round after dinner (all alive however.)

Mr. Whalley has been dubbed by a Saturday Reviewer the last of the anti-Romans, "the last Dodo of religious intolerance," in whom lingers "all the wild unreasoning hatred" which was in past times the common heritage of Englishmen. In the same journal Earl Russell was saluted in 1867 as the Last of the Whigs. There is something touching, it added, in being the solitary specimen of an expiring race: "From Tasmania we learn that the very last of the aborigines is about to sail for England, and we hope that he will be invited to Richmond Lodge." This last of the Tasmanians was the subject of an article two years later, founded upon Mr. Bonwick's book, with its photograph of "King Billy," or William Lanné, the Last Man of Tasmanian blood. A year or two later the same *Review* incidentally remarked in a philological article treating of the use of Greek, that "the last man, with any pretension to philological knowledge," who denied the mutual connexion of the Aryan languages, "died a few years back, about the same time as the last native Tasmanian."

Mr. Trollope's signora impressively assures the bishop, to whom she introduces her daughter, in all

but a whisper, that the blood of Tiberius flows in her veins : " She is the last of the Neros." The bishop had heard of the last of the Visigoths, and had floating in his brain some indistinct idea of the last of the Mohicans, but to have the last of the Neros thus brought before him for a blessing was confessedly very staggering.

Œhlenschläger's five-act tragedy of *Hakon Jarl* records the fortunes of the last of the pagan sovereigns of Norway ; Lord Lytton's *Rienzi*, those of the "last of the Tribunes," while Warwick is his "Last of the Barons ;" his son's *Licinius*, those of "Rome's last Roman," who was moved to vengeance when he saw the gods his sires had worshipped with grave awe, scorned and insulted by slave, and savage, pimp, buffoon, and priest. Joanna Baillie's last of the Romans is Constantine Palaeologus—the alias of her historical tragedy bearing his name is, "the Last of the Cæsars,"—and the keynote is pitched in such strains as this of Othus, the learned Greek—

" O Palæologus ! how art thou left,  
Thou and thy little band of valiant friends,  
To set your manly bosoms 'gainst the tide !  
Ye are the last sparks of a wasted pyre  
Which soon shall be trodd'n out.—  
Ye are the last green bough of an old oak,  
Blasted and bare."

That is in the first scene of the play ; and in the last the speaker, Othus, is "tenderly embraced" by the Genoese sea-captain, Rodrigo, as he exclaims—

“Ah, goest thou? Do I the last remain  
Of those who loved the noble Constantine?  
The last of a brave band? Alas, alas!”

Macaulay celebrates in a rousing lyric the Last of the Buccaneers, as Aytoun does in florid prose the last of British bustards. The Last of the Mohicans is by some thought Cooper's masterpiece. The Last of the Abbés is a story of Leitch Ritchie's. Dr. W. H. Russell offers his Rajah of Auriapore as the last of a race which was old when William and Harold were swearing friendship to each other in Normandy, and which was known in India when Alexander led thither his iron men of war.

Mr. Tennyson makes his bold Sir Bedivere, when the whole Round Table is dissolved, which was an image of the mighty world, go forth, the last, companionless, while the days darken round him, and the years, among new mén, strange faces, other minds. “The last great Englishman” is the laureate's emphatic designation of Wellington, in his Ode on the Death of the Duke.

Recording the death of Mrs. Wordsworth, which left not one remaining of the eminent persons who made the Lake valleys so renowned, Miss Martineau had to tell of her, that she, the survivor of all the rest, had a heart and a memory for the solemn last of everything; that she was the one to inquire of about the last eagle in the district, the last pair of ravens in any crest of rocks, the last old dalesman in any im-

proved spot, the last round of the last pedlar among hills where the broad white road has succeeded the green bridle-path. Finally, we read, she who had noted so many last survivors was herself the last of a company more venerable than eagles, or ravens, or old-world yeomen, or antique customs.

The Last Man is an ideal appropriated by the poets, with a superb disregard to the tenor of Scripture. Campbell saw a vision in his sleep, that gave his spirit strength to sweep adown the gulf of Time:

“I saw the last of human mould  
That shall Creation’s death behold,  
As Adam saw her prime.

“The Sun’s eye had a sickly glare,  
The Earth with age was wan,  
The skeletons of nations were  
Around that lonely man,”

who is pictured as standing prophet-like, with dauntless words exalting himself against the Sun, whose survivor he, his deathless spirit at least, shall be. Hood’s Last Man, equally apocryphal, is less dignified, but more grotesquely sensational. Granville’s prose poem *Le Dernier Homme*, which Charles Nodier was at the pains to edit, is practically neither here nor there. Byron had a dream which was not all a dream, of Darkness, wherein two Last Men played a hideous part, and—

“Even of their mutual hideousness they died.”

Mr. Gilfillan was laughed at in the *Saturday Review* for his rather high-coloured picture of a blasphemer standing on the highest pinnacle of a mountain, alone but unsubdued, spurning with his feet the foaming waters of Noah's flood, warming his hands at the lightning, mingling his voice with the storm—"the last, worst, greatest man alive, and with Satanic lineaments in his face and form attesting him, till he is at last overwhelmed by the flood, the conscious and contemptuous survivor of the Antediluvian world." In earlier works the author of *Alpha and Omega* had made a characteristic study of the literature of the Last Man. A "ticklish and terrible topic" he accounted it, out of Campbell's usual track, and verging on a field where the "giant angels" of genius have alone a right to disport themselves; such a subject as would have suited Dante—"and what a 'Last Man' would he himself have made! what an abrupt and haggard terminus had he been to the species, turning up that scathed face in gloomy triumph to the darkening sun and the reeling constellations!"—or Michael Angelo, or him who drew Medusa "gazing on the midnight sky upon the cloudy mountain peak supine." The taste of the idea of a Last Man has been questioned; but surely, it is submitted, if there be poetry in the thought of a first man, "alone between the virgin earth and the abyss of stars," there must be more in the figure of a last man, forming a momentary link between an earth that

is dissolving and a sky that is rolling together as a scroll. If there be poetry, urges the apologist, in the thought of the last man of the deluge, standing on the last peak of a drowned world, there must be more in the idea of one, from the sepulchre of a perished earth, about to leap, dauntless, into the arms of death, and who feels gaining on him the slow shadow of everlasting darkness. Campbell's *Last Man* is held to be properly nameless—his previous history unknown—the interest being given by the circumstances in which he stands, as he rises to the grandeur of his position while feeling himself “sole mourner at the obsequies of a world.” But the making him a Christian is demurred to, partly because the whole idea of the poem is inconsistent with the Christian revelation, and partly because, as a mere matter of art, the dreary magnificence of the scene had been enhanced, had he been represented as “the last projection of the entire human family, about to be sucked down into the sea of annihilation.” A very prosaic ideal, in comparison, is that of Father Ephraim, in Hawthorne's “Shaker bridal,” who foresees and would hasten the day, when, the “mission of Mother Ann” having wrought its full effect, children shall be no more born and die, “and the last survivor of mortal race, some old and weary man like me, shall see the sun go down never more to rise on a world of sin and sorrow!” Professor Wilson maintained that Campbell's “*Last Man*” was a poem of so low an order that Hood beat

him all to sticks at his own weapons: not that Hood's *Last Man* was a professed parody of Campbell's, but it powerfully burlesqued the whole conception of such a person; and Wilson contends that if there had been anything really sublime, or striking, or terrible, in the idea of a *Last Man*, Hood's poem would have left it unimpaired in one's imagination; but "the very idea being in itself absurd, and contrary to the very nature and constitution of things, not even to be dreamt on a dinner of pork-chops," the humourist's poem "exposed its absurdity." For Christopher North claimed to see just as grotesque a Christian in the *Last Man* of Campbell drifting along in a ship to shores where all are dumb, as in Hood's, on the gallows-tree, with never another man alive in the world, to pull his legs. The last man left in a plague-stricken city, or a burnt-down and burnt-out one, is another sort of conception altogether; and often a poetical one in its grim way; as where Marcello, in *The Second Brother*, compares himself to such a desolate being:

"Then who hath solitude, like mine, that is not  
The last survivor of a city's plague,  
Eating the mess he cook'd for his dead father?  
Who is alone but I? there's fellowship  
In churchyards and in hell; but I! . . ."

In pursuance of an anti-Malthusian argument, Mr. Herbert Spencer, asserting a tendency in cerebral development to lessen fecundity, observes that as the excess of fertility has rendered the process of civiliza-

tion inevitable, so the process of civilization must inevitably diminish fertility, and at last destroy its excess. If so, it would seem that we shall finally, as the inference has been drawn, become so civilized that population will be stationary for all practical purposes, and our resources will increase faster than our needs. And then critical conjecture moots the query, what will happen afterwards, and whether ultimately the whole essence of humanity will be compressed into one marvellously clever but necessarily unproductive individual? An individual in its strictest grammatical sense, and not in high-polite latitudes and platitudes and parts of speech, were such a Last Man as that.

Scott's dusky dwarfish misanthrope wants to know why should not the whole human herd butt, gore, and gorge upon each other, till all are extirpated but one huge and overfed Behemoth, and he, when he had throttled and gnawed the bones of all his fellows—he, when his prey failed him, to be roaring whole days for lack of food, and, finally, to die, inch by inch, of famine. That were, in Elshie's judgment, a consummation worthy of the race. That were a Last Man, and a last ending of him, very much to the Black Dwarf's mind.

Maturin's Bertram is just as bad, or worse, when he speculates on striking a final blow, by which mankind should expire, and himself and his victim be left alone together, the only tenants of a blasted world.

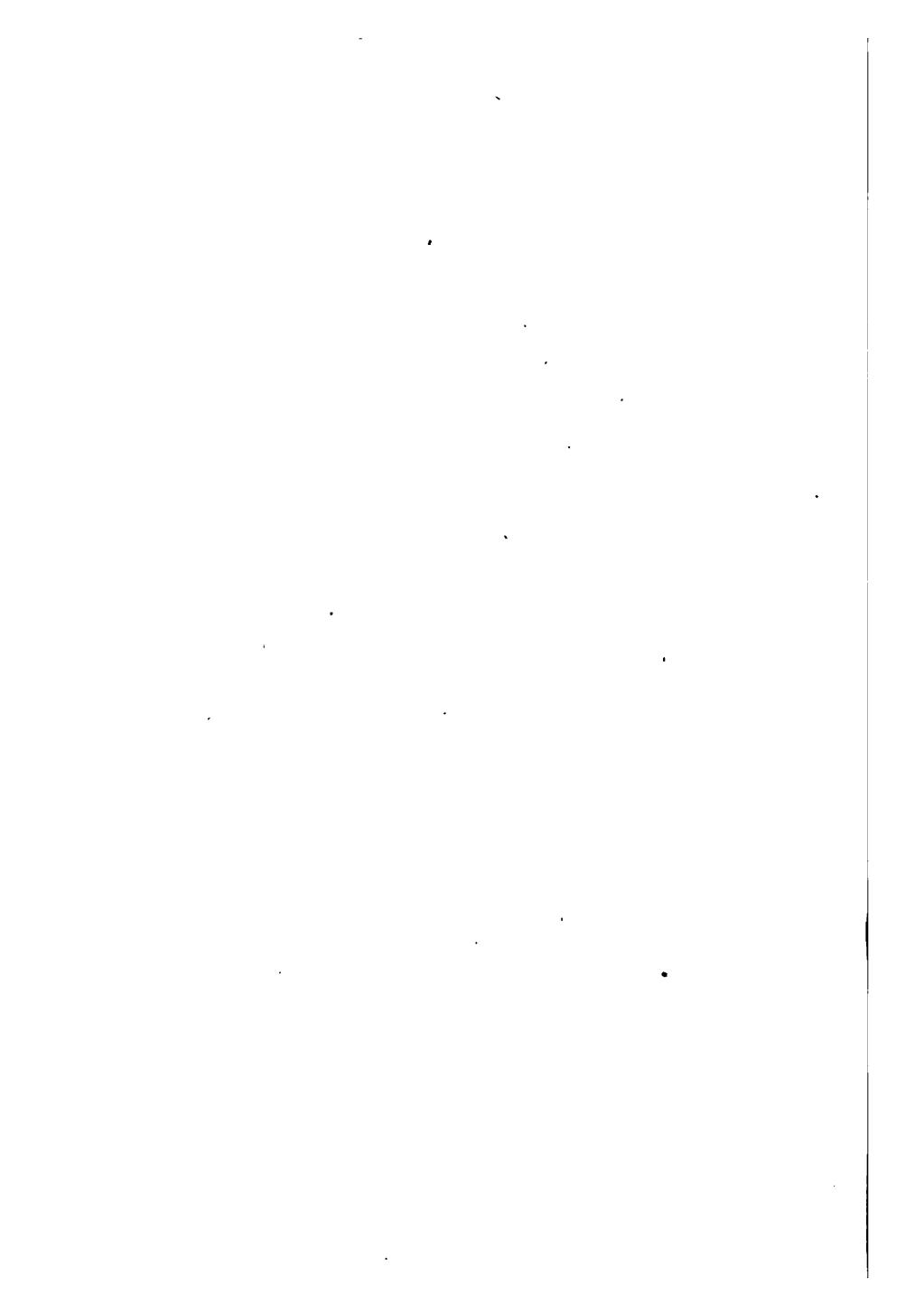
Greedy of life Seneca accounts that man to be who

would like to survive a perishing world ; who would not rather perish with it :

“Vitæ est avidus quisquis non vult  
Mundo secum pereunte mori.”

Speculative philosophy has grimly amused itself with imagining the possible result of individuals suddenly becoming physically stronger than the rest of the world—no more frightful state of society being imaginable than one in which any man might, by the aid of a little chemical skill and a small quantity of apparatus, change the whole condition of human affairs by producing effects compared with which war, pestilence, and famine are slight evils. No very wonderful combination of circumstances, it is suggested, would be necessary to bring history to a close by one enormous act of suicide and murder ; and the speculator discerns a sort of stupendous irony about such a climax which would not be unpoetical—the day after the catastrophe, when the sun would rise on empty streets, drifting ships and silent fields, with a broken bottle in the middle as the cause of the catastrophe, would perhaps, he surmises, be even more grotesque than tremendous if any one were left to witness it. The hypothetical perpetrator would be, with a vengeance, the last enemy of his kind, who in destroying it, destroyed himself. But the last enemy has another name in holy writ.

**The LAST ENEMY that shall be destroyed is DEATH.**



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